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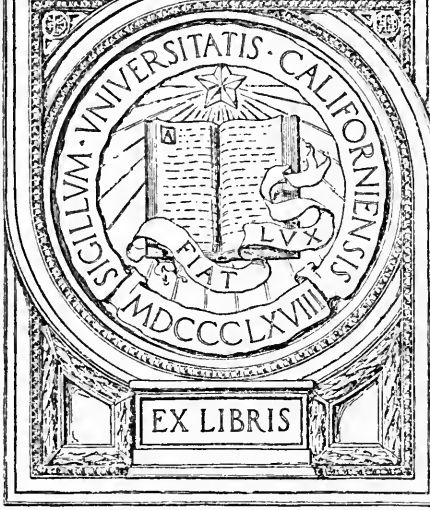


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# CORRESPONDENCE

OF

# LEWIS XVI.

THE

# POLITICAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

# CORRESPONDENCE

OF

# *LEWIS XVI.*

WITH

OBSERVATIONS ON EACH LETTER.

BY

HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS.

VOL. I.

*NEW-YORK:*

PRINTED FOR H. CARITAT.

1803.

THE

# POLITICAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

# CORRESPONDENCE

OF

# LORD BACON.

WITH

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS,

BY

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# PREFACE.

AMIDST the struggles of contending parties, and the fury of hostile passions, to which great public events give birth, there is no task more difficult than to observe with calmness, and appreciate with impartiality, the actors in those memorable scenes. Were it possible to lay down any common principle, to which we might bring back those heated opponents, to fix some sure basis on which we might build a structure of reasoning, to agree on some general axioms from which we

might draw indisputable conclusions, the difficulties would be considerably softened, and hope might be entertained, that by patient investigation, and good faith, we might arrive at length, if not to perfect similarity of sentiment, at least to that tolerant state of mind, which permits us to view without rancour, opinions that do not accord with our own.

Whether we have yet reached that happy period, I shall not pretend to determine; nor can we decide if the present phasis of the French revolution be that in which those who call themselves the friends of Lewis the sixteenth, act wisely in evoking the shade of this unfortunate prince. The motives which have led them to make this appeal to the public are consigned

in the preface to the intended French edition of these letters. We cite the words of the editors themselves.

" Many respectable writers have " attempted to reconcile the memory " of this good king with the esteem " of his contemporaries, which he " never deserved to have lost; their " works have been read with avidity, " and their pages have been bathed " with the tears of regret. But it " never yet entered into the mind of " any person, to paint the unfortu- " nate monarch by his most secret " thoughts, by extracts from his ma- " nuscripts, by his analyses, by his " public and private correspondence; " this, however, is the surest way of " appreciating him, to behold him, " not in his court, amidst his cour-

" tiers, with that kind of borrowed
" soul which the habit of commanding
" gave him, but in the presence of
" his intimate friends, of nature, and
" of his own conscience. It is by
" this mode of trial that we discover
" the man without reproach, and
" that we sometimes feel disgust at
" the great man. The end which it
" was intended to promote in the
" publication of these letters, was to
" scatter a few flowers over the tomb
" of a prince, the friend of mankind,
" whose apotheosis will surely be one
" day made by future generations."

The surest way of appreciating characters, as the editor has observed, is by viewing them stript of that borrowed kind of soul, which the circumstances in which they are placed

lead men to assume. How often when we read ancient history, do we feel a restless desire to know something of the domestic situation, the undisguised feelings of celebrated personages. We see them, like distant stars, lighting up the darkness which covers remote times, and wish for a mental telescope capable of piercing the gloom of ages, through which their beams pass before they reach us.

Whatever opinion may be formed of the motives of the French editors, for the publication of this correspondence, it seems doubtful if the end they had in view will be attained. We live in an age, it has been observed, when every thing is discussed, and the first impressions which we have received respecting any object

are often effaced when we have examined it more closely. At the opening of the French revolution, Lewis the sixteenth was considered by the friends of liberty as an hostile power. In the progress of this revolution he made repeated and solemn profession of his adherence to the principles it had established, and the reforms which had taken place. He accepted the title of restorer of French liberty, and bound himself by the most sacred obligations, to maintain and execute the constitutional laws. In reading this correspondence, which, according to its intended editors, is to place him in the presence of his intimate friends, of nature, and his own conscience, we may be led to suspect, either that we have hitherto mistaken the meaning of these terms, or that conscience is a

more accommodating principle with the rulers of nations than with other men. And whatever disposition we may have to strew flowers over the tomb of the unfortunate, we may be allowed to doubt whether any generation, even the remotest, will raise Lewis the sixteenth to the honors of an apotheosis.

Nor let this opinion be demed rash or severe. If time may be measured by the succession of ideas, we have lived centuries of the common flight of years, since the reign of Lewis the sixteenth; we may, therefore, be permitted to consider ourselves as a sort of posterity with respect to him, and be allowed to be capable of judging him with the calm impartiality, which in the ordinary course of human af-

fairs, is the birthright of succeeding generations. But independently of this consideration, whatever may be the personal feelings or opinion of a writer with respect to political characters or events, he surely, when he presumes to seize the pen of history, cannot lose sight of the dignity of his occupation, or forget, to use the words of Johnson, that he is charged with a certain portion of truth.

When we first unroll the mighty canvas of the revolution, the most prominent figure is Lewis the sixteenth. In the opening of the piece, when we beheld him in possession of absolute power, and shrinking from parting with a small portion where so much was left, the generous mind naturally places itself on the side of

the oppressed multitude, and considers that every weapon wrested from despotism was a trophy gained to justice. But when we observe the progress of the drama, and contemplate him who was once the master of a powerful empire, bending a victim beneath the tempest of popular fury; when we reflect on the close of the tragedy; when we follow him from his throne to a prison, and from the prison to the scaffold; when we witness his sufferings, and his resignation; his meekness, and his wrongs; when we compare his character, and his destiny; and balance his faults, and his punishment; we then see him placed in a point of view in which every sympathy of our nature pleads in his behalf, and we lament that his country was not spared the offence of his death.

In examining the records which treat more particularly of the history of Lewis the sixteenth, we must guard against the slavish panegyrist who views in him no error but that of relaxing the slightest rein of authority, and the intemperate demagogue who, considering the kingly office as a crime, deems the punishment of the holder an insufficient expiation. With those extremes, truth holds no association. From those political rhapsodists, the impartial inquirer turns with disgust; he sees passion deforming every page, the calumniator usurping the pen of the historian, and finds the pleadings of an advocate instead of the decisions of the judge.

But if it may hitherto have been difficult to form a just estimate of the

real character of Lewis the sixteenth from the disfigured documents which have been laid before us, the intended editors of the present correspondence assert, that we have here the most sure and most indisputable means of arriving at truth. The evidence they present is the most infallible and persuasive; it is the confession of the monarch himself. The expression of his inmost sentiment, the transcription of his most secret thoughts, the emanation of his mind with kindred affections, the transfusion of his conscience into the bosom of friendship, in which reserve would have been folly, and prevarication without a motive.

It must be admitted that this kind of evidence is the least liable to chal-

lenge from any quarter, when the only question to be decided is the real opinion of the party, without any reference to the propriety or impropriety of holding such opinion. This is a separate question, of which every one will judge according to the opinion or prejudices he may have previously formed. The advocates of the king, in the confidence of victory, exult at the universal suffrage they have obtained. "This collection," say they, "is "a monument erected to the glory of "Lewis the sixteenth, and which must "appear more worthy of eternal du- "ration, than those magnificent mau- "soleums raised with splendid extrava- "gance, than those statues of marble "and bronze which time silently im- "pairs, or which great catastrophes "overturn and destroy." Whatever be

the duration of this monument, some doubts, after examining it with attention, may remain, whether the consent of the present generation or posterity will ratify this fond prediction with respect to its glory.

It was the intention of the king's friends to have published those papers in two volumes. The first contained simply his letters, and were destined "à nous montrer Louis XVI homme "privé," to portray the private character of the king. The second volume contained all that could portray him "comme homme public," as a public character; and consisted of his discourses, memorials, observations, writings, the analysis of a few of his works, all which objects united were to present us "the last king of France,

" as a prince really enlightened, " made to govern men in the soli- " tude of the cabinet, fitted to become " the counsellor of a king worthy of " executing, capable of judging men, " and transmitting his judgments to " posterity." This work was supposed by the editors, to offer a "full justi- " fication to men who were pre- " judiced; to awaken in generous " minds grateful recollections; to ex- " cite remorse in the hearts of the " king's persecutors; to offer to states- " men useful instructions, and teach " crowned heads that it is not suffi- " cient to possess the virtues of Trajan " and Antoninus; that the courage of " heroes and the policy of great kings " are equally necessary, joined to the " wisdom of a Sully, and the firm- " ness of a Richelieu."

The purposes of the intended French editors have been religiously observed with respect to the king's letters, and also with respect to such of his other papers as have never yet appeared; but it seemed to me unnecessary to swell these volumes with the mass of papers that have been already published, and which are to be found in the journals of the times, and in most of the memoirs or annals of the French revolution. The chief merit which these papers possess in the eyes of the editors, is that they were written by Lewis the sixteenth, and as such, contain the faithful expression of his sentiments. A very few of those papers which were little known, are preserved; but the insertion of the rest was deemed unnecessary for the reasons already mentioned: the titles

of the papers which are omitted will be mentioned in the table of contents.

The materials for this monument to the glory of Lewis the sixteenth have been for some time prepared. The French editors state that they have it in their power to enlarge this collection, but that a choice was necessary. We are, therefore, in possession of those which are most favorable to the cause which the friends of the late king were most anxious to support, deeming the evidence sufficient to gain every suffrage in its favor.

It is unnecessary to mention the reasons which produced the delay of their publication, and still less the means by which these manuscript volumes fell into my hands. The

only important point to be ascertained was that of their authenticity. The French editor, in the note which precedes his preface, states, that the originals are deposited in the hands of a personage, "who will think it a pleasure and a duty to communicate them "to such as are curious or incredulous." This observation is true. But independent of this external proof, which is conclusive to those who are acquainted with the handwriting of the king, such measures have been taken as appeared to me fully satisfactory, to arrive at the greatest collateral security, by consulting such as were most likely to be informed on the subject. The proofs which I have obtained from persons who fill eminent offices under the republic, and from others who exercised the highest [illegible]

under Lewis the sixteenth, and who were consequently instructed both as to the spirit and the letter, leave no doubt whatever with respect to the authenticity of these papers. While they present the king alternately as a private and public man, by his correspondence with individuals and his discourses to the national representation, and to sections of the people, it appears singular, that no suspicions entered the minds of the French editors, that the public, who are called only to admire, would sometimes pause to compare and to reason. The editors, it is true, in their preface hazard certain animadversions, which wear the air of impartiality, and to which they would limit those of their readers. "We dare, at present, "publish without fear in books, what

" is already in every heart; to declare,
" in the name of future generations,
" that Lewis the sixteenth on the
" throne of the Bourbons had no other
" reproach to make himself in the dif-
" ficult art of governing men, than
" that irresolution which neutralises
" every thing, that want of self con-
" fidence which renders the monarch
" null, and that weakness which des-
" troys. "

These are, no doubt, blemishes in the princely character; and if nothing further had been intended in this justification of Lewis the sixteenth than the display of his private virtues, respect for his misfortunes would have left his faults unnoticed. But to defend the memory of Lewis the sixteenth appears less the aim of his friends, than to calumniate the memory

of those who have rendered themselves illustrious, by rescuing their country from the ignoble servitude under which it was oppressed. This generous effort is stigmatised in the prefatory address as a "series of useless "crimes producing only useless dis- "asters;" the revolution, by changing all the elements of social order, is stated "to have caused the most en- "lightened nation of Europe to make "a retrograde step towards barba- "rism;" and what is still more disastrous, "to have rendered indocile to "the yoke the people whom the "king's birth had condemned him to "govern."

The defence of Lewis the sixteenth is, therefore, no longer the point at issue, or at least becomes only a point of secondary consideration. His friends

have shifted the ground on which they might have remained secure, and, by enlarging their means of defence, have left themselves and the object of their idolatry open to attack. It is no longer the king they mean to defend; it is the revolution they are earnest to criminate: let them not be displeased, therefore, if in the observations which have suggested themselves on reading these letters, they sometimes discover a partiality in favor of that barbarism, towards which the most enlightened country of Europe has made a retrograde step.

And what period in the annals of mankind more calculated to awaken solemn rapt attention, to seize every faculty of the soul, to call forth every feeling excited by the sublime and the

terrible, than the epocha of that revolution, which in its effects will change the condition and almost the destinies of man? How long will posterity pause on the solemn page which marks its mighty records? In reading history, we pass rapidly over the common flight of years and ages, like the traveller who diligently pursues his way through a country which presents only ordinary objects; but when this astonishing era unfolds itself to the intellectual view, the reader will feel a sensation similar to that of the same traveller, when suddenly bursting on his sight, he beholds scenes of overwhelming majesty, and finds himself surrounded by images of nature, the beautiful, the sublime, the terrific, the stupendous, which fill his mind with astonishment, and swell his bosom with enthusiastic emotion.

Considering the revolution as the most important event of modern history, every thing that tends to throw any light on that momentous epocha has some portion of interest; and it is with this persuasion, that I presume to offer to the public the observations which accompany the subsequent letters. If I have not concealed my admiration of the great principles in favor of the human race which the revolution was destined to establish, I hope, also, that in commenting on the character and conduct of Lewis the sixteenth, I shall not be accused of insensibility or injustice, while I have sought nothing but truth. Some of the observations subjoined, trivial perhaps in themselves, may derive value from their connection with the mighty event of the revolution; in

the same manner as the obscure individual may be remembered, who carves his name upon an immortal monument, which mocks the destruction of time.

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# CORRESPONDENCE

OF

# LEWIS XVI.

## LETTRE PREMIÈRE.

*A M. de Vergennes.*

17 Octobre 1774.

J'ai lu, monsieur, la dépêche secrète et très-importante de M. le chevalier de Saint-Priest. Je n'ignore pas les services du sieur Thugut, mais je n'en connois pas les détails. Je tiendrai les paroles que le feu roi lui avoit données. Mais la manière ne peut s'exécuter lorsqu'il sera en France, comme M. de Saint-Priest le propose. Quel inconvénient y auroit-il à le laisser à Vienne? Je

sais bien qu'il y répugne; mais je crois être sûr qu'on n'a à Vienne aucune notice sur lui. Quand il y sera arrivé, peut-être ne le remploieroit-on pas dans la politique; mais alors il pourra voyager et venir s'établir en France où il sera tranquille. Et comme d'ailleurs je ne le crois pas Autrichien, ni même sujet de l'impératrice, cela lui sera aisé.

Je ne crois pas que M. de Kaunitz le tourmente sur ses négociations des déclarations moins fortes; si on le savoit, il pourroit les rejeter sur la faute des drogmans qui n'ont pas bien entendu ce qu'il vouloit dire. Il n'y a nulle bonne raison à donner pour son retour par la mer; quand il sera arrivé en France, si la reine demande une place pour lui, n'étant pas du secret, elle ne pourra pas donner des raisons à l'impératrice, surtout pour l'empêcher de retourner à Vienne, que de se fixer en France; et par-là on verra que c'est le cabinet qui le pousse, et s'il y eût jamais eu des soupçons contre lui, ils se renouveleront.

Le prince de Kaunitz comparera les ordres qu'il a donnés, à la manière dont il les a exécutés. Je me souviens que M. d'Aiguillon, en me rendant compte, me dit que le feu roi avoit fait dire à l'internonce, (M. de Thugut) que si l'intrigue étoit découverte, qu'il ne lui donneroit pas de retraite en France, mais une pension pour vivre où il pourroit. La trame découverte, le roi de Prusse ne manqueroit pas de nous brouiller avec Vienne; et ce sera avec raison qu'il parlera des petites intrigues que la cour de France emploie, en montrant que nous n'avons pas agi de bonne-foi avec elle; et dans ce moment où la cour de Vienne veut se rapprocher de nous, il est très-important de ne pas lui donner des ombrages. Si on veut employer M. Thugut, il lui sera aisé, dans la persuasion où je suis qu'il n'est pas né sujet de l'impératrice, de demander son renvoi par raison; alors il pourra venir jouir en France du fruit de ses travaux, et peut-être même sera-t-il recommandé par la cour de Vienne. Voilà ce que je pense sur lui, et pour ne pas nous compromettre.

Les lettres qui sont jointes ici prouvent la confiance qu'on a en lui, et qu'on ne le soupçonne de rien. L'année prochaine où les affaires de la Pologne seront finies, les vues de la maison d'Autriche remplies, où il n'y aura nulle raison de revenir su le passé, où les cours co-partageantes seront en guerre entre elles, et Vienne voulant cultiver notre amitié, ne cherchera pas à inquiéter quelqu'un qu'elle pourroit soupçonner nous être attaché. Vous pouvez lui faire dire que le baron de Breteuil sera chargé de lui donner protection indirecte, et les moyens de s'évader en cas de soupçon.

La politique de M. de Kaunitz est une chose bien incompréhensible. Plus je la vois, moins je la comprends. Par les instructions de Thugut, il paroît qu'il le croit absolument lié avec la Russie, et qu'il n'a pas contribué au traité de paix, du moins l'a-t-il approuvé. De l'autre côté, il nous doit dire qu'il en craint fort les suites; et l'empereur s'étant expliqué avec l'abbé Georges, il faut conclure de cela que sa

politique est d'être bien avec tout le monde pour y trouver son intérêt particulier. Nous sommes liés avec lui par un bon traité, et s'il veut quelque chose de nous, il faut attendre qu'il s'explique, et que nous y voyons quelque chose d'avantageux; car il n'y a rien à craindre de rester tranquille, sur-tout se méfiant des bons offices du roi de Prusse.

Pour M. le chevalier de Saint-Priest, il est absolument nécessaire qu'il reste dans ce pays-là, il y est trop utile pour le laisser revenir; il faut que M. Gerard lui réponde amicalement sur cet article, comme il s'en explique avec lui, sans paroître vous avoir communiqué sa lettre; mais qu'il lui ôte toute idée de retour; qu'il lui dise qu'il a cru l'entrevoir, parce qu'il vous a entendu dire précédemment que ses services me sont très-agréables, et que personne ne peut mieux servir l'État que lui dans de pareilles circonstances, et qu'il aura une récompense digne de ses services quand il aura rempli le temps nécessaire : pour vous, répétez-lui

que je suis on ne peut pas plus content de ses services, et qu'il n'y a pas d'occasion plus belle de me servir; que c'est à lui à rassembler les débris d'un bâtiment en ruine; que c'est à lui de le ressusciter de ses cendres; que vous sentez bien que sa charge est très-pesante; mais qu'avec de l'esprit et du courage, comme il en a, il y réussira beaucoup mieux que d'autres, et qu'il en aura toute la gloire. Vous entrerez après cela dans des détails sur notre commerce; vous lui marquerez que c'est de sa vigilance que dépend sa ruine ou la certitude de revenir dans l'état le plus florissant où il ait jamais été, comme l'ouverture de la mer Noire peut nous le prouver. Enfin, vous le louerez de sa prévoyance à opposer le catholicisme au rit grec, et vous lui ajouterez qu'il ne pouvoit rien faire qui me fût plus agréable, et que je l'exhorte à continuer.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER I.

*To M. de Vergennes.*

October 17th, 1774.

I have read, Sir, the secret and very important dispatches of M. le chevalier de St. Priest. I am not ignorant of the services of M. Thugut, though unacquainted with the details, and will certainly adhere to the engagements made by the late king. But this cannot be accomplished in the manner M. de St. Priest suggests, if M. Thugut should come to France. What inconvenience can result from leaving him at Vienna? I know his repugnance to remain, but I have reason to believe that no informations respecting him have reached that place. Perhaps on his arrival he may not be re-employed in political affairs, in which case he may travel, and come and establish himself in France, where

he will live in tranquillity; and this he may do the more easily, as I believe he is neither an Austrian, or even a subject of the empress.

I do not think that M. de Kaunitz will persecute him on the subject of his negociations respecting less important declarations; but if this should be known, he can throw the fault upon the drogmans, who did not comprehend what he meant to say. I perceive no good reason whatever for his returning by sea, and if the queen upon his arrival in France asks a place for him, not being in the secret, she can alledge no reason to the empress why he should not return to Vienna rather than settle in France; it will, therefore, soon be perceived that the cabinet has pushed him on; and if ever any suspicions arose against him they will be renewed. The prince of Kaunitz will compare the orders he gave with the manner in which they were executed. I recollect that M. d'Aguillon in giving me an account of this, told me that the late king had

made known to the internonce, (M. de Thugut,) that if the intrigue were discovered, he would not give him a retreat in France, but a pension with which he might live where he could. If the plot were known, the king of Prussia would not fail to embroil us with Vienna, and would have some reason to talk of the little intrigues which the court of France employs, by shewing that we have not acted towards Vienna with good faith; and at this moment, when that court wishes to connect itself more nearly with us, it becomes important to give it no umbrage. If the Austrian cabinet should wish to employ M. Thugut, it will be easy for him, (persuaded as I am that he was not born a subject of the empress,) to ask his dismission on account of health; he could then come and enjoy in France the fruits of his labors, and may perhaps even be recommended by the court of Vienna. This is all I can suggest for him, without committing ourselves. The inclosed letters prove the degree of confidence placed in him, and that he is far from being sus-

pected. Next year, when the affairs of Poland are finished and the views of the House of Austria accomplished, when there will no longer be any reason to recur to the past, when the co-participating courts will be at war with each other, Vienna, desirous of cultivating our friendship, will avoid molesting a person whom that court may suspect of bearing us some attachment. You may inform him, that the baron de Breteuil has orders to afford him indirect protection, and the means of escape if necessary.

The politics of M. de Kaunitz are quite incomprehensible; and the more I see of them the less I understand. It appears from Thugut's intructions, that he believes him to be absolutely connected with Russia, and that he did not contribute to the treaty of peace, which, however, he has at least approved. On the other hand, he seems to tell us, that he is apprehensive of the consequences, and the emperor having had an explanation with the abbé Georgel, we must conclude from hence

that his policy is to be well with all the world, as far as it serves his own particular interests. We are connected with him by a good treaty, and if he wishes to obtain any thing of us, we must wait till he explains himself, and till we perceive some advantages in what he proposes; for we have nothing to fear in remaining quiet; above all, when we mistrust the good offices of the king of Prussia.

With respect to M. le chevalier de St. Priest, it is absolutely necessary that he should remain in that country; he is too useful to be suffered to return. Since he has expressed this wish to M. Gerard, he must reply in a friendly manner, and without appearing to have communicated the letter, but in such terms as to leave him no idea of returning. Let Gerard observe to him, that from what he has heard you say, he is persuaded that his services are highly agreeable to me; that no man can be so useful to the state in such circumstances as himself, and that

when he has fulfilled his task, he will meet with a recompense worthy of his labors. You will also not fail to repeat to him how much I am satisfied with his conduct, and that he will never find a more happy occasion of serving me; that it is left for him to prop up an edifice falling to ruins, and save it from crumbling into dust; that you know well how burdensome is the task he has to perform, but that with talents and courage like his, he will succeed far better than others, and all the glory will be his own. You will then enter into details upon our commerce, and shew him that its ruin, or the certainty of its rising to a more flourishing state than ever, depends upon his vigilance, as the opening of the Black Sea may prove to us; finally, you will applaud his care in opposing Catholicism to the Greek ritual, assuring him that he could do nothing more agreeable to me, and that I exhort him to persevere.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE FIRST LETTER.

This, and the following letter, which were in the possession of the committee of surveillance of the convention in 1792, have been already published; but having found them placed in the collection, and as they contain some curious matter, I thought that their republication would give an additional interest to the work.

Perhaps there is less subject of surprise at what has been called the treason of M. de Thugut than may at first view be imagined; nor can it be deemed extraordinary, that a spy of monarchical France should be a chief counsellor in the late coalition against republican France. Ministers, like other men, are influenced by the strongest motives, and as self-interest is generally the leading feature of those who figure at the head of governments, it ought to be no matter of surprise that M. de Thugut should serve the

Austrian cabinet with as much sincerity, if not with as much success, as he had heretofore served the French. That system of politics which has in this instance been called treason, and which an animated writer of our own country has stigmatised by the title of "exploded villany," was too much the mode at the time this letter was written, to merit so harsh a censure; and if indignation in our pure and regenerate days be excited at the mention of these epithets, let it be remembered, that at the epocha when M. de Thugut enacted the spy of the court of France against the country of which he is now the ex-minister, this kind of villany was far from being confined to subalterns, however true it may be that it is now exploded. Of the influence of Austrian counsels, and the existence of Austrian committees, regulating the affairs of the French government from the period of the revolution in 1789, to the fall of the throne in 1792, we have heard much, and probably more than was founded. The causes of the opposition of the court to the first of those events, and which finally brought on the last, lie too near on the surface to

need profound investigation. There is no evidence that the cabinet of Versailles during the last reign, except near its close, was swayed by that of Vienna; and there is great reason to believe that the former was always on its guard against the attempts of Austrian influence. In the present letter we see Lewis the sixteenth giving instructions to his minister respecting the mode of directing the secret negociations (called espionage by one party, and treason by the other) of M. Thugut, and much management takes place in order to keep the queen in the dark respecting these mysterious transactions.

That attempts were made to form an Austrian party in the court of France at that period, is a point on which there is no difference of opinion, and of which the caution of the young monarch in the counsel he gives his minister, affords indisputable evidence. Lewis the sixteenth had succeeded, however, if not in crushing, at least in neutralising this faction by the change of ministers at his accession; particularly in the choice of M. de Vergennes, who is represented as

a person attached to the principles of the old French politics in their primitive purity, before they were adulterated by the Austrian system of the abbé Bernis and the Duke of Choiseul.

Whatever instances of weakness the king may have exhibited on other occasions, nothing could exceed his firmness in the resistance which he made against the multiplied attempts to bend him to the Austrian yoke. The instructions, given by his father the dauphin, had been carefully treasured up in his mind, and the ministers who possessed his confidence, such as M. de Vergennes and Maurepas, were careful that these early impressions should not be weakened. The queen had been tutored in a contrary system with equal sedulousness by an aspiring mother, but her eloquence was idle, and her charms powerless, when employed against this stubborn citadel. So carefully was she excluded from all acquaintance with the secret transactions of the state, that Lewis the sixteenth, scrupulous in his adherence to the precepts of his father, is represented as being

being so much on his guard that the queen was ignorant even of the place where were deposited the memoirs of enmity against the House of Austria, which he inherited from the dauphin; the number of which was every day augmented by the jealous attention of the minister to foster this salutary aversion in the heart of the prince.

It was at this period that the queen, who, like a morning star, had just appeared on our horizon, to borrow the elegant phraseology of the orator, "full of life, and splendor, and joy," found every beam refracted when shot into the political mist. The spirit of chivalry was no more awake to her wrongs at that period, than in subsequent times, and this beautiful princess saw herself not only secluded from the confidence of the king in matters which appeared to interest her most nearly, but exposed to the pleasantries of ministers, who smiled at her impotent efforts to replace them, and accused her, perhaps without reason, of acts of peculation in her adopted country,

to enrich the exhausted treasury of her imperial brother.

Of the continued struggle between the queen and his ministers, Lewis is represented as remaining the calm observer. He seems to have made a just analysis of his own affections. He loved the queen for those qualities which rendered her lovely, and his conjugal tenderness has never been taxed with alienation, or levity; but the secrets of the state were never disclosed, unless in some moment of unguarded confidence, which it has been said she was sometimes earnest to provoke. To keep her altogether ignorant of the affairs of state was found impossible; the mode, therefore, which was adopted with the greatest success was to mislead her with respect to the secret operations of government. Accordingly, in the letter before us, the sieur Thugut, the spy of France against the Austrian cabinet, is supposed by the queen to be an agent in its favor; and she is represented by the king as so little in the secret, "*n'étant pas du secret*," that measures were concerted between him and M. de Vergennes, on the

presumption that when this agent should arrive in France, the queen would be solicitous to reward his zeal by promising him some place or employment.

But whatever might have been the amount of distrust or confidence between the king and queen, as exhibited in this letter, the sieur Thugut appears in no very flattering aspect. It is evident that this ex-minister of the Austrian cabinet had held the post of French inspector of its secrets during the reign of Lewis the fifteenth; which monarch seems so little to have valued his services, that in case his intrigues (that is, the intrigues of M. Thugut) were discovered, he was to expect no asylum in France.

Lewis the sixteenth, however, appears to hold M. Thugut's services in higher estimation. He allows him, under the persuasion that this ex-minister was no Austrian, to come into France, and enjoy the fruits of his labors; and even provides against the dangers which may befal him from the suspicions of the court of Vienna, by assuring him

that M. de Breteuil shall give him indirect protection, and the means of making his escape.

That the baron de Thugut was originally a spy of France seems to admit of no doubt; but, as I have already observed, no conclusion can be drawn on this head against the fidelity with which he has since acquitted himself in his office of minister at Vienna. If his success has not equalled his zeal in this last employment, it must be remembered, that he has only failed in an enterprise where none have succeeded; and that his humiliation and defeat are shared with the most renowned warriors and able statesmen in Europe, without the pale of the French republic. He has been accused of obstinacy in his perseverance to continue the war, when all hope of success of bringing it to its desired conclusion had vanished; but hope is delusive, and we may pardon M. de Thugut for the defect of his political optics, when so many nearer the scene of action than himself have had their sight totally obscured.

# LETTRE II.

## *A M. de Vergennes.*

2 Avril, 1775.

Je vous renvoie, monsieur, la dépêche de M. de Saint-Priest. Je ne crois pas que la Maison d'Autriche entende son intérêt, en ne voulant pas demander la liberté du commerce de la mer Noire ; toutes les démarches que son cabinet fait depuis quelque temps, sont bien obscures et bien fausses. Je crois qu'il est embarrassé de ses nouvelles usurpations en Moldavie, et qu'il ne sait comment se les faire adjuger : la cour de Russie les désapprouve, et la Porte ne consentira jamais à les céder à l'empereur. Je ne crois nullement à ce nouvel accord entre ces cours co-partageantes ; je les crois plutôt en observation vis-à-vis les unes des autres, et se défiant d'elles mutuellement. L'avis de M. de ——

me confirme dans ma pensée. Pour ce qui est de l'invasion que les troupes de l'empereur ont faite dans l'Etat de Venise, je n'y vois nulle raison, mais la loi du plus fort est toujours la meilleure ; elle dénote bien le caractère ambitieux et despote de l'empereur, dont il ne s'est pas caché au baron de Breteuil. Il faut croire qu'il a su fasciner absolument les yeux de sa mère ; car toutes ses usurpations n'étoient point de son goût, et elle l'avoit bien déclaré au commencement. La dépêche que reçut M. Thugut, prouve bien que M. de Kaunitz désapprouve tout ce qui se passe, et a eu la main forcée. C'est sûrement du Lascy ; nous n'avons rien à faire dans ce moment, que de tout voir et nous tenir sur nos gardes sur ce qui nous viendra de Vienne. Honnêteté et retenue doivent être notre marche. Mais M. de Saint-Priest peut toujours tâter le terrain à Constantinople sur la navigation libre de la mer Noire. Je me trompe fort, si les trois cours ne prendront pas querelle à-la-fois ; et gare l'incendie !

LOUIS.

## LETTER II.

*To M. de Vergennes.*

April 2d, 1775.

I send you back, Sir, the dispatches of M. de St. Priest, and do not think the House of Austria consults its own interest, by refusing to demand freedom of commerce on the Black Sea; every measure taken by that cabinet for some time past, is obscure and false. It is, I believe, rather embarrassed by its new usurpations in Moldavia, and does not well know how to obtain their confirmation. They are disapproved by the court of Russia, and the Porte will never consent to yield them to the emperor. I do not give the smallest credit to this new convention between the co-participating courts. I consider them as placed in observation on each other, and watching every movement with mutual distrust;

and the intelligence I have received from M. de Lausun confirms me in this opinion. There appears to me no reasonable motive for the invasion of the state of Venice by the emperor's troops; but the law of the strongest is always the best: this aggression marks the ambitious and despotic character of the emperor, which he has taken no trouble to conceal from the baron of Bretcuil. He seems to have fascinated the eyes of his mother, for she had no taste for these usurpations, which she openly declared in the commencement. The dispatches, received by Mr. Thugut, shew clearly that Mr. de Kaunitz disapproves of all that is passing, and has only acted by compulsion. The main-spring is no doubt *du Lascy*, and all we have to do at present, is to observe attentively and be on our guard against whatever comes to us from Vienna; politeness and reserve should form the whole of our conduct. M. de St. Priest may, however, sound the dispositions at Constantinople, relative to the free navigation of the Black Sea. If I am

not much deceived, the three courts will quarrel at the same time, and then let us beware of the conflagration.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE SECOND LETTER.

After the usurpations in Moldavia, and the continued projects of aggrandisement on the part of the Austrian cabinet, it was not surprising that that government solicited without hesitation from the Porte, the liberty of trading in the Black Sea; but it is difficult to conceive why France should not have asked this privilege exclusively for herself, which would not only have been highly advantageous for the country, but would have been the means of connecting it more closely with the Porte, and would have enabled the

cabinet of Versailles to oppose, with all its influence, the projects of Russia on Turkey in Europe.

Though the king was yet little practised in the art of government, he knew enough to perceive, that under certain institutions power was right; since, as he observes in somewhat of an ironical tone, the law of the strongest is always the best; Lewis felt the injustice of those encroachments against which he inveighs; lamenting as a man, what he could not remedy as a prince. It is very probable, however, that had not the American war intervened, and soon after, that of the French revolution, the three powers which divided Poland would not have remained long in harmony together. The French revolution has altogether deranged the old diplomacy of the northern cabinets. The fate of the Turkish empire is still suspended, and he must be no dimsighted politician who shall determine, with any degree of certainty, the epocha of its dissolution; but if it exists only from the jealousy of the European powers, the friends of the pro-

gress of civilisation and the extension of knowledge, will perhaps wish they may one day come to a better understanding.

In this letter baron Thugut appears again on the scene, where he shows himself no friend to the aggrandisement of the House of Austria. Every man fulfils his destiny; the baron appears to have been born the friend of France, and willingly, or unwillingly, has acted well the part which providence assigned him. We are told that he is once more approaching the cabinet of Vienna.—Perhaps the measure of defeat, and humiliation of the Austrian court, is not yet complete.

## LETTRE III.

*A M. de St.-Germain*

(Sans date.)

MONSIEUR, le mode uniforme de manœuvre pour toute l'infanterie française, que vous m'adressez, est absolument nécessaire. Vous le proposez, et je lui donne, avec plaisir, mon approbation. Il trouvera, sans doute, des contradicteurs, mais il doit plaire aux vrais militaires. Vous demandez, dans un autre mémoire, qu'il soit institué pour les soldats et pour les bas-officiers, un ordre de Mars dont les signes respectés seroient conférés, sur le champ de bataille, aux braves jugés dignes de cet honneur. J'adopte cette idée avec joie : le Français, naturellement passionné pour la gloire, sent des récompenses honorables. L'ordre de Mars deviendroit pour lui un puissant aiguillon pour bien faire. C'est ainsi que

les Bayard, les Crillon, les Duguesclin faisoient des soldats et les conduisoient à la victoire. Donnez à votre projet de nouveaux développemens, cherchez tous les moyens d'exciter l'émulation, de récompenser la bravoure, de faire parler l'honneur: le soldat français mérite bien que le chef de l'Etat s'occupe de lui.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER III.

*To M. de St. Germain.*

(Without date.)

Sir,

The uniform mode of manœuvring for all the French infantry, which you propose to me, is absolutely necessary, and I give

with pleasure my approbation to your plan. It will meet no doubt with opposition, but must be agreeable to real military men. You demand, in another memorial, that an order of *Mars* should be instituted for the soldiers and subaltern officers, the respectable insignia of which should be conferred upon the field of battle on such as are worthy of that honor. I adopt this idea with delight; Frenchmen, whose ruling passion is glory, appreciate honorable rewards, and the order of *Mars* will become a powerful stimulant to generous actions. It was thus that the Bayards, the Crillons, the Dugueselins, formed soldiers, and led them on to victory. Explain your plan more fully, seek every means of exciting emulation, of recompensing valor, and of making the voice of honor be heard; the French soldier well deserves, that those who are at the head of the nation should take an interest in his concerns.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE THIRD LETTER.

No event created at the time more surprise at Versailles than the nomination of the Count of St. Germain to the war-department. The history of this general is somewhat singular. He was at first a Jesuit, which profession he left for that of the army, where he served with the rank of lieutenant. An affair of honor led him to pass into the service of the Elector Palatine, which he quitted for that of the Emperor Charles, where he obtained the rank of major-general. Upon the death of this prince he returned to France as field-marshal, was made lieutenant-general in 1748, and during the peace which followed that period, had the command of Flanders. In consequence of a dispute with marshal Broglio in 1760, he went to Denmark, where the king named him field-marshal, and gave

him the command of all his troops. On the king's death, being obliged to resign his command, he returned to live near Worms, and fixed his definitive residence in Alsace.

This nomination caused the more wonder, as the name of M. de St. Germain had never been mentioned among the competitors for this department. In the memoirs written at that period the history is thus related. M. de Malesherbes was conversing in his cabinet with M. Dubois, commander of the Police, on the affairs of the court, when he observed that there were many competitors for the war-department then vacat, naming Messieurs du Chatelet, de Breteuil, de Castries, and de Vaux. "The whole "court is in agitation," says Malesherbes, "whom would you choose, my friend, if you were king?" "A person, monseigneur, who is not on the list of candidates, because virtue and merit conceal themselves; the count of St. Germain." — "You are in the right," exclaimed the minister; "he is a man of great merit, and his mind has been proved by misfortune, and injustice;

justice; but we are building castles in the air, he has no protectors; O! that I were the master!"..... Here the conversation ended; but the same evening the subject of the nomination of the new minister was renewed with M. de Maurepas. "Whilst the king is employed in choosing," said M. de Malesherbes, "I will give you an idea of a friend of mine; which is to bestow the place on M. de St. Germain; I own I think him very capable of filling it, but he is absent, and without protectors."—"Without protectors!" replied M. de Maurepas, "let us be his friends; he possesses talents, and independently of his military abilities, has written me letters filled with excellent ideas." M. de Maurepas went to the king, and gave him an account of his conversation with M. de Malesherbes.—The king decided at once in favor of M. de St. Germain, recommended the greatest secrecy, wrote the letter, and ordered the two ministers to send it to Alsace by a confidential messenger. A person of this kind was found, one who had been attached to the general

through all his fortunes. When he reached his habitation, he found the modern Cincinnatus planting a pear-tree. M. de St. Germain recognised the stranger.—"Is it you?" he exclaimed," what in the name of heaven brought you here?"—"A matter of importance," he was answered, "but finish your planting, and then we will go into the house."—"Speak, I shall find time enough to plant."—"I come by his Majesty's orders."—"What! has the king again been prejudiced against one of his most faithful servants, and who has no other regret than that of being no longer useful to him? have I not yet filled up my cup of misfortunes?" "This, M. le Comte, will be easy to bear; here is the dispatch, read it"....M. de St. Germain kissed the letter with transport, and stammered out a few words of acknowledgement. "What has led the king to think of me?" The messenger told him that he had received instructions to request him to set out instantly.—"But how? I have neither dress, nor equipage to appear at court."—"In whatever manner you go you will be welcome; come along, let us set off."

Of the order in question, and which forms the subject of the king's letter, we are altogether ignorant, since nothing occurs in the memoirs of the time to throw light on this matter. The king appears to have been an enthusiast at the moment, for the institution of this military nobility, as the reward of courage and virtue, and which was probably meant by this reforming minister as a counterpoise to that ordinary nobility which founds its distinction on no such adventitious qualities. As we hear nothing further of this institution than what is contained in the king's letter, it is not unlikely that the *habitués* of the court were successful in opposing this romantic innovation.

## LETTRE IV.

*A M. de Malesherbes.*

Versailles, 17 Avril, 1776.

Je n'ai pu vous exprimer assez dans notre dernier entretien, mon cher Malesherbes, tout le déplaisir que me causoit votre résolution bien prononcée de vous démettre de votre ministère : maintenant que j'ai réfléchi avec quelque maturité sur cet objet, je vais vous ouvrir mon cœur, et je transmets mes idées sur le papier, pour qu'elles ne s'échappent point de ma mémoire.

Entouré, comme je le suis, d'hommes qui ont intérêt à égarer mes principes, à empêcher que l'opinion publique ne parvienne jusqu'à moi, il est de la plus haute importance, pour la prospérité de mon règne, que mes yeux de temps en temps

se reposent avec satisfaction sur quelques sages de mon choix, que je puisse appeler les amis de mon cœur, et qui m'avertissent de mes erreurs, avant qu'elles aient influé sur la destinée de 24 millions d'hommes.

Vous êtes, avec le sage de Maurepas et l'intrépide Turgot, l'homme de mon royaume qui avez le plus de titres à ma confiance; et il ne faut pas faire entendre à nos ennemis communs, que vous êtes sur le point de la perdre, lorsque vous ne l'avez jamais plus méritée.

Lorsque Maurepas m'eut présenté votre nom, comme un de ceux qui étoient le plus faits pour donner du poids à mes projets de bienfaisance, j'étudiai en silence votre vie publique et privée, et je vis que je serois peut-être plus heureux de vous offrir une grande place, que vous de la recevoir.

Ma cour des aides étoit, avant votre première présidence, une compagnie assez mal organisée, qui se laissoit soudoyer par les

financiers, dont on lui avoit donné la surveillance. Jamais un contrôleur-général ne la trouvoit en opposition, quand il lui présentoit des édits *bursaux* odieux : vous êtes venu, mon cher Malesherbes, vous avez purgé ce corps des membres qui le déshonoroient; et d'après son institution primitive, il est devenu l'asile de l'indigent et de l'opprimé.

La nature vous avoit donné une ame *citoyenne*, et vous l'avez transmise à votre cour des aides; du moins, j'en juge par les remontrances vigoureuses que vous lui avez dictées, et que j'ai placées dans ma bibliothèque, choisie entre les Catilinaires de Cicéron et les Philippiques de Démosthènes; je ne suis pas encore bien sûr qu'il soit utile de jeter des maximes si philosophiques au travers d'une constitution monarchique, que tant de mécontens ont intérêt à ébranler; mais vos remontrances respiroient le bien public; elles m'éclairoient sur des désordres que ma cour et mes ministres conspiroient à me cacher, et je ne les ai considérées que

sous ce point de vue; alors, malgré quelques principes qui ne pouvoient avoir mon assentiment, j'ai applaudi intérieurement à votre courage, et j'ai senti que vous aviez des droits à ma reconnoissance.

Nos entrevues, où Maurepas étoit en tiers pour nous juger tous deux, ajoutèrent à mon estime, et je vous donnai le département de ma maison, vacant, par la démission de la Vrillière : vous balançâtes long-temps à venir respirer à ma cour un air qui convenoit peu à la touchante simplicité de vos mœurs; mais Turgot vous fit entendre qu'il ne pouvoit pas, sans vous, opérer un bien durable : il vous décida, et je l'en estimai davantage.

Vous avez commencé votre ministère avec une vigueur qui ne contrarioit pas mes principes : on se plaignoit des lettres de cachet dont votre prédécesseur disposoit au gré de ses favorites, et vous avez refusé d'en faire usage. La Bastille regorgeoit de prisonniers qui, après plusieurs années de détention,

ignoroient quelquefois leurs crimes, et vous avez rendu à la liberté tous les hommes à qui on ne reprochoit que d'avoir déplu à ces messieurs en faveur, et tous les coupables qui avoient été trop punis.

Vous avez entrepris des réformes utiles dans ma maison militaire, mais bien de gens ont conçu des alarmes; je devois appréhender que le mécontentement n'entraînât des troubles pareils à ceux de la Ligue et de la Fronde, et alors j'ai été obligé de renvoyer à des temps plus heureux, le moment si cher à mon cœur, où, bannissant une vaine pompe, je n'aurai plus d'autre maison que les hommes de bien, tels que vous, qui m'entourent, et pour gardes, les cœurs des Français.

C'est dans cette circonstance orageuse, mon cher Malesherbes, que vous me demandez votre retraite : non, je ne vous l'accorderai pas, vous êtes trop nécessaire à mon service; et quand vous aurez lu cette lettre en entier, je connois assez votre ame

sensible, pour croire que vous cesserez de me la demander.

D'ailleurs, ce n'est pas au moment que vous êtes obligé de céder aux circonstances, qu'il convient que vous donniez votre démission. La cour vous croiroit en disgrace; et ce mot, quand il s'agit d'un sujet aussi recommandable que vous, ne doit jamais m'échapper.

Je vous attends demain chez Maurepas; comptez sur mon estime et sur mon amitié.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER IV.

*To M. de Malesherbes.*

Versailles, April 17th, 1776.

I HAD no power to express to you, my dear Malesherbes, in our last interview,

all the chagrin I feel at your determined resolution of resigning your place in the ministry. After having maturely reflected on this subject, I shall unfold my heart to you, and shall commit my ideas to paper, that they may not escape from my memory.

Surrounded as I am by men, who are interested in misleading my principles, and preventing the voice of public opinion from reaching my ear, it is of the highest importance to the prosperity of my reign, that I should sometimes be able to repose my eye with satisfaction on a few sages of my own choice, whom I can call the friends of my heart, and who will warn me of my errors before they have influenced the destiny of twenty-four millions of men.

You, together with the wise de Maurepas, and the intrepid Turgot, are the men in my dominions who have the highest claim to my confidence, and you

must not lead our common enemies to imagine, that you are on the point of losing that confidence, at the very moment when you have deserved it.

When Maurepas presented your name to me as one of those who were best fitted to give weight to my plans of beneficence, I examined in silence your public and private life, and perceived that I should perhaps be happier in offering you a great place, than you in receiving it.

Before your first presidency, my *cour des aides* was a company ill organised, and corrupted by the financiers whom we had placed under its inspection. A controller-general never found an opposition when he presented odious fiscal edicts. You appeared, my dear Malesherbes; you have driven from this corps the members which dishonored it, and it is now become, agreeably to its primitive institution, the asylum of the indigent and the oppressed.

Nature gave you the soul of a citizen, and you have tranfused into your *cour des aides*, at least if I may judge by the vigorous remonstrances which you have dictated, and which I have placed in my chosen library between the Catilinarians of Cicero and the Philippics of Demosthenes. I am not indeed sure if it be useful to throw maxims so philosophical across a monarchical constitution, which so many have an interest in shaking; but your remonstrances breathed the spirit of public good; they explained to me the disorders which my court and my ministers had conspired to hide, and I have considered them only under this point of view. Notwithstanding, therefore, they held forth some principles to which I could not assent, I inwardly applauded your courage, and felt that you had a right to my gratitude.

Our interviews, at which Maurepas was present to judge us both, served to increase my esteem, and I gave you that department of my house, vacant by the dis-

mission of la Vrillière. You long balanced whether you should come and breathe the air of my court, so ill in sympathy with the interesting simplicity of your manners. But Turgot made you understand, that without your aid he could operate no durable good; he determined you, and I esteemed him the more. You began your ministry with a degree of vigor no way contradictory to my principles, by refusing to make use of lettres de cachet, which were so much complained of, and of which your predecessor disposed at the will of his favorites. The Bastille overflowed with prisoners, who, after years of confinement, were sometimes ignorant of their crimes, and you restored to liberty all those, who had only to reproach themselves with having displeased these gentlemen in power, and such of the guilty as had been too severely punished. You undertook useful reforms in my military establishment; but many persons conceived alarms. I had reason to apprehend that the discontent might produce troubles, resembling those of the

League and the Fronde, and I was obliged to reserve for an happier period the moment so dear to my heart, when, banishing all vain pomp, I shall have composed my household of men of worth, such as you who surround me, and shall have for my guards the hearts of the French.

It is in this trying conjuncture, my dear Malesherbes, that you ask leave to retire. No, I will not grant your request! you are too necessary to my service, and when you have read the whole of this letter, I know enough of your sensibility, to believe that you will cease your demand. Besides, it is not at the very moment when you are obliged to yield to circumstances, that you ought to give your dismission; the court will think you in disgrace, and that word, when it relates to a subject so respectable as yourself, ought never to pass my lips.

I expect you to morrow at Maurepas's; be assured of my esteem and friendship.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE FOURTH LETTER.

M. de Malesherbes is a character of whom we may be lavish of praise, without the censure of extravagance. This celebrated personage had occupied the place of secretary of state about nine months from the date of this letter, having succeeded the Duke de la Vrillière the July preceding. Under Lewis the fifteenth he held an office unknown in civilised countries, which in France was called *Directeur de la librairie*, and which may be translated, *Inspector of the press*. This place he appears to have filled with considerable satisfaction to all those whom it was his office to persecute, and impugn; and the constituted goaler of the human mind was hailed as the friend of freedom and philosophy, and the protector of all enlightened men.

But it appears that M. de Malesherbes not only protected philosophy and literature, but carried the heroism of his office to a still further excess, and placed the tribunal of letters on a level with that of justice, pretending that its decisions had the force of law. Under his administration arose that formidable power called public opinion, which was destined, not only to brave, but finally to overpower and crush despotic authority. M. de Malesherbes was a disciple, or rather a professor of the doctrine of the perfectibility of the human mind, which doctrine at that period had many illustrious votaries; and it was in pursuance of this theory that numerous reforms took place in the French government on the accession of Lewis the sixteenth. This prince was too just not to feel and acquiesce in the necessity of those reforms, but unfortunately had neither sufficient strength to direct, or constancy to support them.

M. de Malesherbes, therefore, comes forward on the scene only to make us regret his loss; it does not appear what where the immediate

immediate motives which led him to have formed so decided a resolution as that mentioned in the opening of this letter. It was with considerable repugnance, and after many interviews with the king, that he was prevailed on to accept the place of minister. He stipulated his conditions on his entering into office; conditions not such as the interested usually bargain for in similar circumstances, conditions for himself, but stipulations of benevolence and mercy for others. Before he undertook the charge, he received the royal promise, that no *lettres de cachet* should be signed, but such as he presented; that his place should be held during his own pleasure, and that his retreat should not be obstructed by any royal reclamation.

In accepting this place he had yielded to the entreaties of M. Turgot, who was at that time in the full career of reform. These reforms Lewis appears to have favored; whatever were the real sentiments of the monarch, M. de Malesherbes was persuaded at the time of his sincerity,

and published this opinion as one of the leading motives of his acceptance. It seems, however, that a more intimate connection had led him to change his opinion; and as he saw the storm gathering on the horizon, he was resolved to shelter himself in due season.

M. de Malesherbes was president of the *cour des aides* at the time when Lewis the fifteenth determined to suppress the parliaments. Whatever opposition might have existed in these judiciary corporations against the royal authority, the remedy proposed by M. de Malesherbes in the convocation of the States-General, would have had little tendency to diminish. He was right in observing that courts of justice were imperfect organs of the public will, but national representation, such as that by the States-General, was still less likely to be the support of arbitrary power. How fatal to such power was this plan of M. Malesherbes, when carried into execution twenty years afterwards, the history of the revolution has shewn: in the present instance, it is his integrity as administrator, and his knowledge

as financier, which the king mentions with such distinguished eulogium.

" Nature, " says the king, " has given you the soul of a citizen;" the expression does honor to the personage by whom it was penned, and still more to the virtuous minister to whom it is addressed. Great credit is due to the judgment of the king as such, in the critique which he passes on the philosophical maxims which pervaded the remonstrances in question. The knowledge of M. de Malesherbes's democratic and anti-catholic principles, were not dissembled by him, but he knew also how to distinguish between the real lover of his country, and the secret enemy of the altar, if not the lukewarm friend of the throne.

No part of the administration entrusted to M. de Malesherbes appears to have occupied him more than the abuses relative to *lettres de cachet*. In a memorial presented to the king, he states that he found that more than half the number of prisoners in the Bastille, and the dungeons of Vincennes, had

been confined upwards of fifteen years, and that their loss of reason rendered them unfit for the enjoyment of liberty. The horror which a benevolent mind must feel at such discovery can be easily comprehended; but it was less the sight of the victims, than the power of making such, which excited those emotions. "I shuddered," exclaims this benevolent minister, "on my entering into office, when I found myself seated at my bureau, opposite to a single secretary, and absolute master of pronouncing arbitrarily, and without appeal, sentences of so dreadful a nature."

The whole of this letter, which was communicated to the editor by M. de Malesherbes, places the king in a most respectable, and amiable point of view. He appears solicitous to enter into a confederacy with enlightened and virtuous men against those who surrounded him, and whom he represents as interested in misleading his opinions, and preventing that of the public from ever reaching his ear. He talks of the wisdom of Maurepas, and the intrepidity of Turgot,

as if this wisdom and intrepidity, like the men who are designated as the possessors, were the objects of his earnest choice. It were to argue a great deficiency in candor not to believe, that these professions when they were made, proceeded from a mind that felt their full influence. Youth is the season of ingenuity; the king spoke as he felt; but youth also is the season of inconstancy, and unhappily this was one of Lewis the 16th's constitutional defects. Those who charge him with hypocrisy at this early age know but little of the human heart; nor ought the perseverance of M. de Malesherbes, even after the affectionate conclusion of this letter, to be construed into any other motive, than that of seeing the approaching triumph of the enemies to reform, and probably what the king did not himself at the time perceive, an approaching disposition to yield to those whom he represents to his minister as his most dangerous enemies.

We have made a few cursory observations on three of the ministers who at this period composed the administration, the chief

director of which was the Count de Maurepas, who has been styled the Mentor of the French monarch. M. de Maurepas was called to the direction of public affairs by Lewis the sixteenth, from an exile of twenty-five years, during the reign of his grand-father. Lewis the fifteenth inherited from his predecessor none of the few virtues he possessed, and all his vices. Though endowed with few faculties for governing, and delivered up to the grossest sensualities, he had contrived nevertheless, in following the maxims left him by Lewis the fourteenth, to keep the nation in the same state of political and civil servitude in which he had found it. His increasing age and debauchery lessened still more the few powers he possessed; the government of the state fell under the direction of ministers, who very faithfully adhered to, and even perfected the systematic despotism of the master. Of these ministers Maupeou and Terray were the most intrepid in combating the philosophic opinions which were then opening on France, and punishing, in various modes, their authors and abettors. Their last vi-

gorous act of despotism was the dissolution of the Parliaments, whose privileges, however limited, served yet as a dyke against the erection of the monarchy into an absolute and indeterminate tyranny. One of the first acts of the Count de Maurepas was the recall of the exiled Parliaments, and the disgrace of the late king's ministers. A total revolution was operated in the internal government by the dimission of Maupeou, Terray, and their colleagues, whose places were occupied by Turgot and Malesherbes; and the definitive disgrace of the Duke of Choiseul humbled the Austrian party, which, under the protection of the queen, was gaining influence in the cabinet of Versailles.

Whether M. de Maurepas was himself imbued with liberal sentiments, no minister could have acted with more efficacy towards the destruction of that systematic tyranny which had weighed hitherto on France. A visible and very potent motive for action may indeed be found in his personal resentment against the ministers of Lewis the fifteenth; but though the recall of the

Parliaments might have been necessary to strengthen his own authority, while it lessened that of the crown, yet the admission of such men as Malesherbes and Turgot to the administration of affairs, men of revolutionary energy, and incorruptible faith, would lead us to suppose that he had some more honorable feeling than resentment to gratify, and that notwithstanding what has been called the inconceivable lightness of his character, he was himself the friend of many of those reforms which afterwards took place in the government. If those men were only the instruments of his ambition, to keep himself in place, and the king under his tuition, it is less his levity than his rashness which appears inconceivable.

# LETTRE V.

*A M. Turgot.*

Ce 15 Avril, 1776.

VOTRE administration bienfaisante, mon cher Turgot, vous fait honneur; elle obtient l'approbation de tous les Français. Vos vues grandes et sages, le bien que vous opérez, les services que vous me rendez, ne sauroient s'oublier; ils sont gravés dans ma mémoire, et encore plus dans mon cœur. Que cette lettre soit pour vous un témoignage de la satisfaction de votre roi et de votre ami. Continuez de faire le bonheur des Français, et vous ferez celui d'un roi qui ne veut être que le père de ses sujets. J'ai lu votre mémoire, il est rempli de vues sages et utiles, mais je crains que ce ne soit là encore le rêve d'un homme de bien. Nous le méditerons ensemble, et peut-être que,

par ce moyen, nous pourrons réparer bien des maux, et amener d'utiles changemens. Adieu.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER V.

*To M. Turgot.*

April 15, 1776.

Your benevolent administration, my dear Turgot, does you honor, and obtains the approbation of every Frenchman. The greatness and wisdom of your views, the good you effectuate, and the service you have rendered me, cannot be forgotten; they are engraved on my memory, and still deeper on my heart. May this letter

be a witness for you of the satisfaction you have conferred on your king and your friend. Continue to render the French happy, and you will thus bestow happiness on a king, whose only desire is to be the father of his subjects. I have read your note; it is replete with wise and useful projects, but I fear that this also is only the dream of a good man. We will meditate together upon these things, and we may, perhaps, by this means repair many evils, and produce useful changes. Adieu.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE FIFTH LETTER.

The name of M. Turgot has become so familiar, and his acts when minister have had so considerable an influence on the fate

of the French nation, that it is almost needless to enter into any details respecting either his personal history, or that of his administration. It is from the time that this celebrated personage was called to the functions of comptroller or minister of finance, that we may date the epocha of the French revolution; for though this great event really took place after the lapse of fifteen years, yet the principles of government which he introduced, the reforms which he made, and the still greater which he meditated, annex to his name the honor or the reproach of being the father of the French revolution.

Turgot was destined by his family for holy orders; he received an ecclesiastical education at the seminary of St. Sulpice, and was prior of the Sorbonne. One of his discourses at that period has been noticed for its eloquence: the subject was the utility which nations have reaped from the Christian Religion. The morality of the Pagans, he observes in this discourse, consisted only in the art of forming citizens of a certain nation, or philosophers distinguished by the

pre-eminence of their maxims superior to that of their cotemporaries; while Christian morality, on the contrary, had obligatory maxims and duties for its basis, and creates in man a new creature: that it was the protectress of equality of rights; labored for the destruction of domestic and feudal slavery; and contributed, by the mildness of its precepts, to soften that restless and turbulent spirit which characterised the nations of the ancient world. There is nothing new in these observations; but the opinion of so eminent a man as Turgot in a point of such infinite importance is at all times worth the repetition. Had the reforming philosophers of our days thought or written as reasonably as their master, we should have less to lament certain effects of the French revolution.

M. Turgot soon afterwards endeavoured to establish a doctrine which has met with a more favorable reception; that of the continual progress of the human mind to a state of perfection, or what is called the doctrine of perfectibility. In this work, which

remains unfinished, he speaks of certain events as hastening this great amelioration. One of those events was the American revolution, which he lived to see accomplished; of the effects of this revolution he conceived hopes, which, under the administration of the wise president who is now called to govern that vast country, seem likely to be realised.

This system of perfectibility was not an idle hypothesis in the mind of M. Turgot. It was a principle on which he constantly acted, and the province of Limoges, of which he was the Intendant for fifteen or twenty years, beheld the phenomenon of an administrator, whose efforts were habitually directed to counteract or soften the fiscal calamities, which his predecessors or colleagues had so often thought it their duty to aid or aggravate. He was never known to publish an edict or declaration which tended to burden the people. Though an executive officer only, he constantly refused his obedience, and it was one of those refusals which first made him noticed by the king.

When the intendants were sent to their provinces, it was usual to introduce them into the counsel to receive their instructions; those which M. Turgot received from the Abbé Terray contained orders for new taxes, the imposition of which he resisted with firmness, and prayed the king to receive his dismission rather than make him an instrument of crushing his subjects, already too much oppressed. The king said not a word, but soon after Turgot was called to the ministry of the marine, from whence he was summoned to fill the post of comptroller of finance, in the place of the Abbé Terray.

This important office was accepted by M. Turgot with much hesitation, and after the stipulation of several conditions, of which the principle were severe economy, no bankruptcy, no new taxes, and no loans. The motives for these requisitions were explained in a memorial, and are too obvious to be noticed. When he entered into office, he found his department in the greatest disorder, as might well be imagined; the

expenditure exceeding the receipt, anticipations on the revenue, and considerable arrears. His first great operation was the establishment of the liberty of the corn trade throughout the interior of France, which gave general satisfaction to the country, but which met with violent partial opposition from such as were interested in the restriction. Among the most formidable of M. Turgot's antagonists on this occasion, was M. Necker, then a banker at Paris, whose hostility is marked by the memorialists of the time as less the effect of difference of opinion respecting the object, than of envy at seeing his own plans of reformation forestalled. He wept (it is the brother of M. Turgot that speaks) like Alexander at the conquests of his father, conquests which he wished himself to have made. Impelled by feelings of resentment, M. Necker attacked plans which tended to regenerate France, and the most important of its concerns, that of trade and finance. His pamphlet appeared at the moment that the famous revolt, excited by the enemies of the minister, took place at Paris.

The

The great basis of M. Turgot's operations, called the system of the economists, was the amelioration of landed property, and the augmentation of its produce, on which he proposed to form the principal establishment of the revenues of the state. This tax, under the name of the *impôt-foncier*, or land tax, forms at present half the revenue of the French republic. In pursuance of this system, he was under the necessity of using measures which thwarted the interests of many and powerful individuals; but as he manifested a disinterestedness in this reform, which turned to the advantage of the public, and to the immediate relief of the lower classes, the enthusiasm of the nation seconded his projects, and procured him the title, which he ever since retained, of the *virtuous* minister.

Thus supported, M. Turgot undertook the total regeneration of the state. Every reform which he made or proposed created him hosts of enemies; for as every reform diminished the power or the privileges of individuals in favor of the people, those who suffered

were of course loud in their exclamations. To those clamors he had to oppose the benedictions of the people whom he relieved or enriched: the approbation of the king supported him against the calumnies and menaces of the court, nor does it appear that he was insensible to the requitals of the Muse, who, in the person of the philosopher of Ferney, contributed

" To spread his name o'er lands and seas,
" Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms."

Voltaire, who so often had prostituted his pen to vain eulogium on the great, addressed himself at the close of his life to the good. The following are the verses which he sent to M. Turgot:

On m'accuse d'avoir chanté
Maupeou, Terray. . . . à ma patrie
Odieux pour l'éternité:
Alors je pris la liberté
D'abuser de la poésie;
J'employai le pinceau brillant
De l'art et de la flatterie.
Mais aujourd'hui lorsque je crie

Presque des bords du monument
Où je vais déposer ma vie,
Que mon pays à son Titus,
Son Sully, son second Turenne,
Que les beaux-arts, et les vertus
Annoncent sa gloire prochaine,
Mes accens n'en imposent plus,
Et j'ai pris ma voix naturelle.
C'est pour le coup que tout est bien;
Et le poète au vrai fidèle
N'est plus qu'un simple historien.

The approbation of M. de Voltaire was, however, no evidence of extraordinary merit in the minister, since the poet had been almost always lavish of his praises towards men in power. But M. Turgot, it is said, had some peculiar claims to his attention, since amidst the reforms meditated was one in which this philosophic writer had labored the greater part of his life. M. Turgot, though once a prosessed believer in the truths of christianity, is represented as having become sceptical as he advanced in years. These anti-religious dispositions were regarded by the clergy as not only dangerous in a minister, but peculiarly so in an economical minister of finance.

This heretical pravity might have been tolerated had it been confined to speculative doctrines, but the alarm for the safety of the church and state became general, among the clergy at least, when they heard of such economical projects as that of changing the place of royal consecration from Rheims to Paris; of dislodging the holy phial brought from heaven by the pigeon; of altering a few phrases of the coronation oath which appeared more favorable to the priesthood than the laity; and omitting the obligation of exterminating heretics.

It does not appear at first sight to common observers, nor even after longer reflection can it be well conjectured, the connection that subsists between operations of finance and innovations in matters of faith. The clergy, who from education and habit are in general men of deeper reflection and longer foresight than other men, and whose scent of heresy is consequently more sagacious, saw the necessary connection that existed between the pigeon of Rheims, the baptism of Clovis, with other matters of like religious obser-

vance, and the due maintenance of the majesty of the church. They felt that the financial speculation which could extend itself to the distant detail of an economical consecration, might, perchance, in the intermediary space fix its eyes on their benefices, abbeys, tythes, ecclesiastical forests, and other immense domains; and that till the reform of Rheims took place, which was to save so much future expence to the state, the minister might amuse himself, in computing what advantages might be gained to the people at present, in making economical experiments on the property of the Church. As the constituted guardians of the ecclesiastical weal, the clergy were founded in the remonstrances which they made at this period, and of which we may speak more fully hereafter. Some of this order there were, no doubt, who deemed of the holy pigeon and the baptism of Clovis, as M. Turgot, M. de Malesherbes, and Lewis the sixteenth, at the time had deemed, but those were of that class of philosophers who were called at the time the incredulous or infidel clergy. The rest thought more wisely, if not more conscientiously, and reasoned like the senator Crassus

mentioned by Livy, who reproached his Caste with their indifference to the peckings of the holy chicken, the observance of which belonged exclusively to the patrician order, and had raised their commonwealth to the highest pitch of greatness.

To enter into any further detail of the reforms of M. Turgot would be unnecessary, since they have appeared before the public in various ways, and have been carried into their full effect by the revolution. The king's letter is so much the more interesting as it paints his real sentiments with respect to M. Turgot and his operations. What the particular memorial is to which the king alludes we know not; but it appears, that it was some great project of future reform which the minister meditated. While the king remained in these sentiments he merited no doubt the title of Titus, which the poet bestowed on him; but we have only to turn to the following letter to see what was the fate of our modern Sully.

# LETTRE VI.

## *A M. de Malesherbes.*

Versailles, 2 Mai, 1776.

Turgot, mon cher Malesherbes, ne convient plus à la place qu'il occupe; il est trop entier, même dans le bien qu'il croit faire. Le despotisme, à ce que je vois, n'est bon à rien, dût-il forcer un grand peuple à être heureux. Le parlement, la noblesse, Maurepas sur-tout, qui m'aime véritablement, demandent sa retraite, et je viens de la signer; je ne vois pas pourquoi cet acte de rigueur, nécessaire à la tranquillité publique, entraîneroit votre démission: vous avez les talens de Turgot, mais non l'aspérité de son caractère; vous êtes tolérant sans être foible, et le bien que vous désespérez de faire aujourd'hui, vous avez la sagesse de le renvoyer au lendemain.

Restez au ministère, mon cher Malesherbes; votre franchise m'est nécessaire encore, et vous la devez à votre ami, si vous ne la devez pas à votre roi.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER VI.

*To M. de Malesherbes.*

Versailles, May 2, 1776.

Turgot, my dear Malesherbes, is no longer fit for the place he occupies; he is too pertinacious, even in the good he wishes to do. Despotism, in my opinion, is good for nothing, even when it would force a great people to be happier. The

parliament, the nobility, and, above all, Maurepas, who loves me sincerely, demand his retreat, and I have just signed it. I do not see why this act of vigor, necessary for public tranquillity, should occasion your dismission. You possess Turgot's talents without his asperity of character; you are tolerant without being weak; and the good which you despair of accomplishing to-day, you have the wisdom to defer till to-morrow.

Remain in the ministry, my dear Malesherbes; your freedom of character is still necessary to me, and it is a debt you owe to your friend, if not to your king.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE SIXTH LETTER.

M. Turgot had now reached the end of his ministerial career. He had succeeded in gaining enemies wherever he proposed reforms, and as his principal support, next to the rectitude of his views, had been the approbation of the king, he had only to fall when this last stay bent under him.

Two or three days before the king pronounced the sentence of dismission against him, M. Turgot observed to the monarch that this event must soon necessarily take place. He had already given Lewis some intimation on this subject in preceding letters, and, conscious by what a feeble thread he hung when it was on the king's favor and perseverance, he observed to him with somewhat of prophetic harshness, that the fate of

weak princes was that of Charles the first of England, or of Charles the ninth of France.

It is to M. de Malesherbes that the king imparts his intention; it is to the friend and colleague of the minister he is about to disgrace that he brings the accusation. Turgot, my dear Malesherbes, is ..... what? an ambitious, inattentive, or prodigal minister?--no! he is too obstinately persevering in the good he would do--too inflexibly just. What a minister!--What an accusation! "Despotism," says the king, "is good for nothing, even when employed to force the people to be happy." This sentiment taken in the abstract is just, and even sublime when proceeding from the lips of a monarch; but the following sentence of the king's letter furnishes the commentary of the apophthegm and the excuse of the minister.

"The parliament, the nobility, Maurepas, especially, who loves me, demand his dismission, and I am going to sign it." This was the division against the minister--in his favor were his inflexibility in good, the ap-

plauses of the wise and virtuous, and the benedictions of the people. But this is a subject too serious for declamation; let us review in an authentic document this host of enemies held up by the king against his minister; let us read the defence of this minister, not in apologies written by himself, or his friends, but in the solemn and public acts of the monarch, confirming the great reforms which Turgot had projected.

This act is the answer of the king to the remonstrances which the parliament made against the enregistering the edicts for the suppression of the *Jurandes*, (the privileges of the companies of Arts and Trades), of the *Corvées*, and for the generalisation of the *Taille* or personal tax. This answer was given about six weeks previous to the dismission of M. Turgot.

"I have examined," says the king, "with great attention the remonstrances of my parliament; they contain nothing which has not been foreseen and maturely digested, before I decided on sending my edicts

and declarations. But my parliament ought to have seen that all these laws (the Jurandes) have for their object to secure abundance in my good city of Paris, to release commerce from restrictions that were injurious to its prosperity, and to provide relief for such of my subjects as subsist only by their manual labor, and who are the most exposed to indigence (*Corvées*): my intention is not to confound rank, nor to deprive the nobility of my kingdom of those distinctions which it has acquired by its services, which it has always enjoyed under the kings my predecessors, and which I will always maintain. There is no question here of an humiliating impost (*Taille* or personal tax), but of a simple tax to which every one will think himself honored in contributing, since I myself have set the example, by contributing in proportion to my domains. I am happy to believe that my parliament has been moved only by its zeal, for I can never suppose that it has any intention to withdraw itself from the submission which it owes me; but now that I have explained myself the motives

which engage me to persist in my resolution, I expect that it will no longer defer proceeding to the pure and simple enregistering of my edicts and declarations. It may rest assured, that if I hereafter find that any of the articles contain inconveniences which I have not been able to foresee, my regard for my people will engage me to remedy them."

The parliament continuing refractory, the king a few days after held a bed of justice, in which he enregistered M. Turgot's edicts. "There is none," said the king, "who love the people but myself and M. Turgot." The monarch at this time acted from no impulse of enthusiasm; it was the result of calm reflective deliberation. The parliament had remonstrated, the nobility, the courtiers, the whole caste of the privileged of every description, the titled, and the rich, had put themselves in insurrection against the minister; the king had weighed their objections, had considered all the tendencies and bearings of M. Turgot's reforms, and yet stood stern with the minister against the

tempest. This triumph was, however, but short. The rock against which Turgot leaned was at length undermined. "Maurepas, especially, who truly loves me," says the king, "demands his retreat." If the former part of the administration of this minister favors the supposition that he acted sincerely with respect to the reforms, though he was more moderate in his views than the ministers whom he introduced to the king, M. de Maurepas, on further examination, appears to be nothing but the mere courtier, and of a nature more designing and dangerous than it is commonly the misfortune of princes to find. Two years before this period he had expelled Maupeou and his parliament, the creatures of the crown to the lowest dregs of servility introducing a refractory parliament and a reforming ministry. These instruments were necessary for the consolidation of his own power. Having gained the ambitioned ascendancy over the monarch, he now uses his influence to defeat these new competitors for royal favor, and, alarmed at the progress which liberal and philosophical principles had made on the mind of

the king, he checks at once the dangerous propensity, and, with the authority of a Mentor, as he was entitled, demands the minister's dismission.

Demand Turgot's dismission! the minister might indeed be dismissed from the royal presence, but could the recollection of his virtues, his acts of beneficence, his enlarged and noble projects, his great and stupendous enterprise of calling a whole nation into political existence, be dismissed from the minds and hearts of the people? Vain illusion! The immortal principle had now taken root; that privileges when opposed to the happiness and well being of the people were but dust in the balance, had been proclaimed loudly from the throne; the doctrine was embodied, it had put on form and substance; unlike the idle hypotheses of visionary statesmen, there was in Turgot's plans that full, practicable, and practised benevolence, which comes from the heart and goes to the heart. His capacious mind embraced the universality of his country, it was the love of mankind which devoured him.

Turgot

Turgot might be disgraced by the court, but his name will for ever be held in honorable remembrance by his country.—A few years only have intervened; the parliaments, the nobility, Maurepas, the monarchy, have all been swept away—and what remains?—the recollection of Turgot's virtues, and that stupendous monument of which he laid the foundation, the great and immortal principles of the French revolution.

## LETTRE VII.

*A M. de Malesherbes.*

Versailles, 7 Mai, 1776.

Votre obstination m'afflige singulièrement, mon cher Malesherbes. Sully ne quittoit jamais Henri IV quand ce prince avoit besoin de ses lumières. Vous êtes, si vous me permettez de le dire, un peu égoïste dans votre vertu.

Enfin vous voulez votre retraite, et je vous l'accorde. Voyagez donc, puisque vous avez besoin de voir d'autres contrées que celle qui vous regrette, et que vous pouviez rendre heureuse.

A votre retour, venez me voir comme à l'ordinaire; et m'entretenir avec la même intimité : mon visage, à cette époque, ne

sera pas plus changé que mon cœur; et, n'ayant que de l'estime l'un pour l'autre, nous n'aurons pas besoin de nous réconcilier.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER VII.

*To M. de Malesherbes.*

Versailles, May 7, 1776.

Your obstinacy, my dear Malesherbes, affects me singularly. Sully did not forsake Henry the fourth, when that prince stood in need of his talents. You are, permit me to tell you, somewhat of an egotist in your virtue. Since, however, you

are determined to withdraw yourself, I consent. Go, then, and travel, since you wish to see other countries than that which regrets you, and which you could have rendered happy.

At your return come and see me as formerly, and let us resume the same intimacy in our intercourse. My countenance will be no more changed than my heart, and as our reciprocal sentiments are only those of mutual esteem, we shall not stand in need of reconciliation.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE SEVENTH LETTER.

If any quality of Lewis the sixteenth could equal his inconstancy and weakness, it was his simplicity in supposing that M. de

Malesherbes would remain in the ministry after the dismission of M. Turgot. At the close of the last letter the king, apologising for this "act of rigor" against M. Turgot, endeavours to retain M. de Malesherbes, by representing to him that he possessed the talents of his friend, without his asperity, and could wait patiently till the morrow for the good he could not effect in the day. But M. de Malesherbes knew well the instability of the ground on which he stood, nor could he, as a man of honor, remain in office when his friend was expelled, and not only his friend, but the principles also on which he acted, and which formed the basis of their common association.

M. de Malesherbes did not hesitate; his resignation instantly followed the dismission of M. Turgot; it appears from this letter, that in the interval, which was only five days, he had undergone much solicitation on the part of the king, since his steadiness of refusal is characterised by obstinacy. The king endeavours to win him over by complaisant allusions, and talks of Henry the

fourth and Sully. Whatever resemblance might exist between himself and Sully, Malesherbes must have felt how great was the distance, in some points at least, between Lewis the sixteenth and his illustrious ancestor. He felt, also, that if he was, as the king assures him, too selfish in his virtue, he was not worthy of a better fate than his friend, whom the monarch had just characterised as being too "inflexible in his wish of doing good." M. de Malesherbes, with all his zeal in the cause of the people, and his personal attachment to the king, an attachment which the event proved to be sincere, would not dishonor himself in the eyes of his country and of posterity, by continuing to hold his place! He disdained to be the instrument of an intriguing hypocritical minister, and refused to yield to the king's solicitations. M. de Maurepas had now gained so great an ascendancy over Lewis, that it became vain to hope that other counsels would be followed than such as this minister suggested, especially after the fatal influence which he had exerted in the dismission of his late colleague.

# LETTRE VIII.

*A M. de Maurepas.*

(Sans date.)

On veut le renvoi de M. de St.-Germain. Vous vous plaignez vous-même, mon cher Maurepas, des innovations et des réformes que son zèle, pour mon service, lui a fait faire. J'étois persuadé que ces réformes et ces innovations étoient utiles. Dans mon conseil d'État j'ai souvent entendu, avec intérêt, la lecture de ses mémoires; ils me paroissoient dictés par la sagesse, l'amour de l'ordre et de l'économie. St.-Germain me plaisoit, mais on se ligue contre lui; ses ennemis ont juré sa perte. Il a perdu votre confiance, mon cher Maurepas, il ne pourroit plus faire le bien. Je suis forcé de l'éloigner, mais je vous avoue que son mémoire a fait sur moi la plus vive impression. C'est à regret que je lui donne un successeur: je

devrois peut-être, en cette circonstance, résister à mon conseil, mais je dois, quoique roi, faire céder mon opinion à celle de la majorité, et j'ai signé,

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER VIII.

*To M. de Maurepas.*

(Without date.)

THE removal of M. de St. Germain is generally wished for, and you yourself, my dear Maurepas, complain of the innovations and reforms, which his zeal for my service led him to introduce. I was persuaded that these reforms and innovations were useful, and in my council of state have

often listened with interest to his memorials, which appeared to me to be dictated by wisdom, the love of order, and economy. St. Germain was agreeable to me, but there is a league formed against him; his enemies have sworn his destruction; he has lost your confidence, my dear Maurepas; he could, therefore, no longer do good, and I am compelled to remove him: but I acknowledge that his memorials have left a strong impression on my mind, and I name his successor with regret. Perhaps I ought on this occasion to resist the decisions of my council, but I am obliged, although a king, to yield my own opinion to that of the majority, and I have signed.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE EIGHTH LETTER.

HAD we not received sufficient evidence of the instability of the king's resolutions and of the texture of his moral courage, this letter would furnish another striking example. M. de St. Germain was not only personally agreeable to Lewis the sixteenth, but he seems, while he is expelling him from his councils, to take pleasure in making his eulogium. The king was persuaded that those reforms were useful; the memorials of the minister were dictated by wisdom, the love of order and economy; they had made the most lively impression on his mind, "but," says the king, with singular simplicity, "his enemies have sworn his ruin. You yourself, my dear Maurepas, have complained of the innovations and reforms which his zeal for my service has led him to make."

That the enemies of "wisdom, of the love of order and economy," should have sworn the ruin of a reforming minister was perfectly natural; that the wily Mentor should wish to check the ascendancy which this upright minister had gained over the mind of his royal pupil, is also very reasonable; these men acted in conformity to their instinct; but who in reviewing this history of dismissals, the secret causes of which are laid open in this correspondence, can avoid deploring the fate of the king, placed, like Medea, between the good and the evil, appreciating with all the feelings of honor and integrity which belong to virtuous men, the one, and yet, though armed with power to pursue it, submitting and resolving to consummate the other? And who, raising his mind above the intrigues of courts, and the littleness of individuals, but must mourn over the fate of nations enstrusted to such parasites, and such princes? The king is convinced, he tells his favorite, that the enemies of the minister are the enemies of his plans of doing good; and who does he drive from his presence? the rapacious and prodigal banditti that form

the majority of his counsels? No! it is the man of integrity and worth; the minister of his choice, who enjoys and merits all his consideration and esteem I believe it is generally admitted that M. de St. Germain's plans of reform did not deserve all the approbation which the monarch has bestowed on them, and that his retreat from ministry was not marked with that nobleness and independence of character which distinguished his two other colleagues. The king, however, had the fullest impression of the utility of these plans, the greatest personal confidence in his minister's administration; but as this minister had lost the confidence of his council and courtiers, he sentences him to the impossibility of any longer doing good.

The administration of these three ministers is the most important epocha of the reign of Lewis the sixteenth till the revolution. Of that event those men were the presiding causes; and if the good intentions of the king had been seconded by firmness of character, the reformation of abuses, and the gradual introduction of civil and political liberty, would

have spared his country many of the calamities which it has suffered from the revolution, and himself the dreadful catastrophe by which at length he fell.

## LETTRE IX.

*A M. de Forbonais.*

Ce 16 Janvier, 1778.

Sous le gouvernement des rois qui m'ont précédé, monsieur, des circonstances malheureuses et imprévues ont formé la dette publique; j'ai cherché tous les moyens de l'éteindre; j'ai consulté les hommes qui joignirent la théorie à la pratique; j'ai confié les places administratives, en cette partie, aux financiers les plus habiles : ils ne m'ont offert, pour remède, que des emprunts, des impôts, ou la banqueroute; des projets désastreux de banque, ou des actes frauduleux. Ruiner l'État, ou pressurer le peuple; voilà tout leur secret! Ce n'est pas ainsi que Sully acquittoit les dettes contractées par le bon Henri, après une guerre longue et sanglante, lorsque les forfaits de la Ligue, la haine des Catholiques, et la méfiance des Protestans semblèrent ôter toute confiance; Sully ne se borna point à de bizarres spécu-

lations, il méprisoit les esprits systématiques : ce n'est que dans l'économie qu'il trouvoit des ressources. Exciter l'industrie, protéger l'agriculture, encourager le commerce; voilà toute sa politique, toute ses ressources et tous ses moyens financiers. Je ne m'étonne plus si mon aïeul, le grand Henri, que mon cœur chérit et révère, avoit acquis, par les services de cet excellent ministre, le cœur des Français. Henri étoit adoré, et cependant j'ose vous assurer qu'il ne pouvoit pas aimer le peuple d'un amour plus tendre que celui que je porte à tous mes sujets. M. de Forbonais sera pour moi le Sully du siècle de Henri. Depuis quarante ans vous avez occupé des places, où votre noble désintéressement a fait époque; vous avez prouvé que vos connoissances étoient réelles, que vos talens n'empruntèrent rien des faux systèmes : osez entreprendre et exécuter; soyez le bienfaiteur de la nation, le guide de nos financiers, le conseil de votre roi; sauvez l'État, venez accepter la place dont vous êtes digne.

LOUIS.

## LETTER IX.

*To M. de Forbonais.*

January 16, 1778.

During the government of the late kings my predecessors, Sir, unhappy and unforeseen circumstances formed the public debt, which I have tried every means of liquidating, and on which I have consulted persons, who joined theory to practice. I have confided the places of this part of the administration to the most able financiers, and they have presented me with no other remedies than loans, taxes, or bankruptcy, disastrous projects of bankers, or fraudulous acts. To ruin the state, and oppress the people, seems to be the whole of their secret. It was not thus that Sully acquitted the debts contracted by the good Henry, during a long and bloody war, when the crimes of the League, the

the hatred of the catholics, and the mistrusts of the protestants, seemed to have destroyed all confidence. Sully did not confine himself to eccentric speculations; he despised the spirit of system, and found his resources in economy alone.—The whole of his policy, his finances, and plans of finance, consisted in promoting industry, protecting agriculture, and encouraging commerce. I am no longer surprised that my ancestor, the great Henry, whom my heart cherishes and reveres, obtained, from the services of this excellent minister, the affections of the French. Henry was adored, and yet I dare affirm, that he did not love his people with a more tender attachment than that which I bear towards my subjects. M. de Forbonais shall be to me what Sully was in the age of Henry: during forty years you have run a career of regenerating instruction; during forty years you have filled places, in which your noble disinterestedness forms a new epocha; you have given proofs, that your knowledge

was solid, and that your talents borrowed nothing from false systems. Venture to undertake, and execute; be the benefactor of the nation, the guide of our financiers, the counsellor of your king; and save the state by hastening to accept functions of which you are worthy.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE NINTH LETTER.

After dismissing those ministers who had stemmed the torrent of state prodigality, and found a remedy for these circumstances, to which the king gives the misnomer of unforeseen, and unfortunate, it is not astonishing that whatever were his good intentions and desire of economy, he found himself perplexed and unhappy. The king complains

that the remedies at present administered (M. Necker was then minister) were loans, taxes, bankruptcy. One of M. Turgot's conditions on entering into office was, no loans, no more taxes, no bankruptcy. The successors of Mess. Malesherbes and Turgot finding the plans of these revolutionary ministers impracticable in their own hands, very modestly returned to the old routine, and the reputation of trade companies, *corvées*, the *taille*, and other taxes of the like exclusive nature was duly rehabilitated. An exception must, however, be made in favor of M. Necker, who inherited some of the dispositions of his predecessors, but who finding, like the rest of his colleagues, that it was impossible to go on without either loans or taxes, appears in the choice of evils to have taken the former, and to have converted the treasury of the state into a vast banking house. It is difficult to know what particular embarrassment the king was under when he addressed this letter to M. de Forbonais; but he seems to have discovered, that if his lately discarded ministers were too obstinate and persevering in their desire of doing good, the whole secret

of the present was to ruin the state, and oppress the people. Whatever may have been the secret of his colleagues, history will do M. Necker the justice to acknowledge that such was not his secret or intention.

The king appears to have fallen into a great error in this subject, and to have mistaken the remedy for the disease. The evil was not in loans or taxes, but in the debt which occasioned them; a circumstance which was so far from being unforeseen, however unfortunate, that is was an object always pressing on the sight. It was the cause of this calamity that M. Turgot had been so solicitous to remove by the introduction of severe economy in every department. This minister had to contend against dilapidations and prodigality of every kind; to curb the extravagance of the queen and the royal brothers; to wrest the treasury from the hands of favorites; to become, in short, the Cerberus of the state. This, it must be admitted, was no gallant way of saving the finances of the country, but was at the same time the only mode that was left. The king must also

have been mistaken when he asserts, that he had confided the department of the finance to the most dexterous administrators; since, according to his own confession, their plans tended to nothing but ruin and oppression. While he invoked M. de Forbonais to be his Sully, the king had not considered the distance between himself and Henry the fourth. Every candid mind will, however, do the king the justice he claims in the parallel which he draws, and will perhaps admit, that his disposition to do good might not be inferior to that of his illustrious ancestor: but simple disposition is a sterile quality; he wanted that active benevolence which so much distinguished Henry, that perseverance and imperturbability in the execution, which are so essential in the reformation of abuses. The few letters we have transcribed are sufficient evidences how singularly he was disqualified for the post in which he was placed, and the task he had undertaken.

## LETTRE X.

*A M. le duc de Charost.*

16 Mai, 1778.

Vous passez votre vie, mon cousin, à fonder des établissemens utiles; non-seulement votre sollicitude se partage pour les arts, mais elle va au-devant de ceux qui les cultivent : c'est prouver, par vos actions, mon cousin, que vous avez hérité de cet amour chevaleresque que le bon Sully avoit pour tous les Français. Comme vous, j'aime à encourager les malheureux; c'est à ce titre que je veux fonder deux places à l'école de dessin, que je destine pour des jeunes personnes dont les dispositions seront prononcées : vous serez libre de me désigner celles qui mériteront le plus d'être admises au concours.

Je vous renouvelle, avec grand plaisir, mon cousin, les sentimens d'estime que j'ai pour vous.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER X.

*To the duke de Charost.*

May 16th, 1778.

You spend your life, my cousin, in forming useful establishments, and your solicitude extends not only to the arts, but to those who cultivate them. Your actions prove that you inherit that romantic affection the good Sully felt for all Frenchmen. Like you, I love to encourage the unfortunate, and, with this view, mean

to found two places at the Academy of Drawing, destined for such young persons as shall discover a decided talent for that art. I leave to your choice the nomination of those who merit the best to be admitted as candidates.

I reiterate with infinite pleasure, cousin, the particular sentiments of esteem I bear you.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE TENTH LETTER.

This letter forms the eulogium both of the person by whom it was written, and the person to whom it was addressed; and although it contains little else than a com-

pliment to the Duke of Charost, discovers a disposition for genuine benevolence in the king, which does honor to his heart. The name of Sully so frequently recurs in his private correspondence, that it appears to have been the character in the history of his country which he had most studied, and on which he dwelt with particular complacency. Amidst the struggle of factions, and the entanglements of parties, the mind is soothed in reposing on incidents such as these; and a wish involuntarily arises, that the writer of such a letter had been destined by fortune to those occupations for which he so justly praises his beneficent cousin.

## LETTRE XI.

*Lettre de M. Necker à Louis XVI, en lui envoyant le traité de l'administration des finances.* 1782.

SIRE,

C'est avec une respectueuse timidité que je prends la liberté de faire, à V. M., hommage du travail auquel je me suis livré pendant ma retraite; je ne savois, en l'entreprenant, si je le rendrois jamais public, et quand il a été fait, de grands motifs ont déterminé mon incertitude. Je supplie votre majesté de ne porter de jugement sur cet ouvrage, qu'après l'avoir lu tout entier : c'est dans sa manière calme et supérieure de juger les hommes et les choses, que je mets ma confiance; car je n'ai point laissé d'amis autour d'elle, quoiqu'il m'eût été bien facile d'en faire. Loin de tout, et n'aspirant plus à rien,

c'est par un sentiment pur et digne des grandes qualités de V. M., que je désire ardemment son approbation; et c'est avec un cœur pénétré de son infinie bonté, que j'ose au moins solliciter son indulgence. Je mets aux pieds de V. M. les sentimens profonds d'amour et de respect pour sa personne, qui me suivront jusqu'au tombeau, et qui s'unissent à tous ceux que je dois, comme étant de S. M. le plus humble et le plus obéissant serviteur,

NECKER.

*Note. Le roi accueillit mal et la lettre de M. Necker et son mémoire. Voici la lettre qu'il adressa à M. de Vergennes en cette circonstance.*

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER XI.

*M. Necker to Lewis the sixteenth, sent with his treatise on the administration of finances.* 1782.

SIRE,

WITH respectful timidity I take the liberty of presenting, as an homage to your Majesty, a work which I have written during my retreat. When I undertook this task, I was doubtful if I should ever render it public, and since it has been finished, powerful motives have overcome my indecision. I intreat your Majesty will pass no judgment on this performance, till you have perused the whole: in your calm and superior manner of judging men and things, I place my confidence; for I have left no friends around

your royal person, although they might with ease have been obtained. Far from all, and having no further pretensions to any thing, I desire ardently your Majesty's approbation. From a sentiment pure and worthy of your great qualities, and with a heart penetrated by your goodness, I presume at least to solicit your indulgence. I lay at your Majesty's feet those sentiments of profound affection and respect, which will follow me to the tomb, and which are blended with those I owe to your Majesty, as being the most humble and most obedient of your Majesty's servants,

NECKER.

*Note. The king received coldly M. Necker's letter and his work, and on this occasion addressed the following to M. de Vergennes.*

## LETTRE XII.

*A M. de Vergennes.*

. . . . . 1782.

Vous recevrez ci-joint, monsieur, l'ouvrage que j'ai seulement parcouru, et où j'ai mis çà et là quelques notes, mais sans suite. En tout état de cause, il me semble que s'il avoit les meilleures intentions possibles, il auroit adressé l'ouvrage manuscrit à son successeur, au lieu de l'envoyer au public; mais il aura voulu nourrir son parti, et, parce qu'il aura prévu mes intentions, il aura pris les devans en prévenant les usages qui en permettent la publication. Vous verrez, dans sa lettre, qu'il fait le *calin;* il sera instruit de l'effet de celle de sa démission.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER XII.

*To M. de Vergennes.*

. . . . . 1782.

You will receive inclosed, Sir, the work which I have looked over rapidly, and occasionally noted, but without order. In every point of view it appears to me, that if his intentions were of the purest nature possible, he would have addressed his manuscript to his successor, instead of making it public. But the truth is, he had a desire to support his party, and, foreseeing my intentions, took the start of me, and anticipated on the forms in use, which permit the publication. You will perceive by his letter, that he fawns; he will soon see the effect produced by that, in which he announced to me his dismission.

LEWIS.

## LETTRE XIII.

*A M. de Vergennes.*

23 Mai, 1783.

Je ne sais pas si je commets une indiscrétion, monsieur, mais ma confiance en vous m'engage à ne vous rien cacher. M. Dangevillers m'a envoyé le billet, sans me dire si c'étoit de mon aveu ou non; il est vrai que la reine me demanda, sur le mauvais état de la santé de M. Necker, qu'il pût venir passer quelque temps auprès de Paris, pour voir des médecins : je le lui ai accordé, à condition qu'il ne viendroit pas à Paris et qu'il verroit très-peu de monde. Je vous confierai, qu'avant de me la demander, elle m'avoit demandé s'il n'y avoit pas d'opération de finances prochaine, et elle m'a dit qu'elle ne m'auroit pas fait la demande s'il devoit y en avoir : en tout, elle me parut, comme je le savois, très-peu attachée à la

personne

personne de M. Necker. Je vous avouerai que m'y étant mal pris, cet hiver, l'occasion n'étoit plus la même, et que je ne vois que peu de différence entre une province peu éloignée et une campagne. Lyon étoit peut-être pris à cause des *agioteurs ;* j'ai pensé ainsi, qu'en montrant de l'indifférence à son personnel, cela lui donneroit moins de célébrité. Ce n'est pas pourtant que je veuille le perdre de vue, ni ses amis; j'envoyai chercher M. de Castries, après que la reine m'eut demandé la permission; je lui dis ce que j'avois dit à la reine, et j'ajoutai qu'il devoit se souvenir, il y a deux ans, qu'au départ de M. d'Ormesson, je lui avois mandé formellement que M. Necker, ni ses amis, ne devoient pas songer qu'il rentrât jamais en place; que si M. Necker se tenoit tranquille, et que ses amis ne fissent pas parler de lui, je le laisserois tranquille ; mais, que si par rapport à lui il s'élevoit des bruits, et qu'il se fît des choses contraires aux opérations du gouvernement, ce seroit moi qui me croirois attaqué, et qu'alors je le renverrois à *Genève*, et qu'il ne revien-

droit jamais plus en France. Je laisse à votre sagesse à communiquer ce que vous voudrez de cela au contrôleur-général; je comptois lui en parler moi-même jeudi, mais il seroit peut-être trop tard. J'ai compté sur sa discrétion sur les particularités qui y sont contenues : il peut dire que le personnel de M. Necker lui est indifférent, et que, comptant sur mes bontés et sur celles de la reine, il ne craint rien; mais sur-tout qu'il prenne garde à ses amis vrais ou faux. Tant qu'il ne s'occupera que de la chose publique, il peut être tranquille. Je ne peux finir cette lettre sans vous rappeler que le (20) (10) mai est passé; j'espère qu'il s'en passera encore comme celui-ci.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER XIII.

*To M. de Vergennes.*

May 23, 1783.

I know not if I commit an indiscretion, but my confidence leads me to leave nothing concealed from you. Mr. Dangevillier sent me the note, without informing me whether or no it had received my approbation. The Queen, it is true, requested that Mr. Necker might have permission, on account of his bad state of health, to pass some time near Paris, in order to consult physicians. I consented, on condition that he should not come to Paris, and should see few people. I must also observe to you, that the queen had previously enquired whether any operations of finance were about to take place, and told me, that had that been the case, she

would not have made the request; and upon the whole, she appeared to me, as I I already knew, very little attached to M. Necker. I will acknowledge to you, that not having acted with sufficient address this winter, the occasion was no longer the same, and I see little difference between a neighbouring province, and a country-seat. Lyons was perhaps chosen on account of the stockjobbers, and I imagined, that by shewing indifference about him personally, I gave him less chance of celebrity. I do not, however, intend to lose sight of him or his friends. I sent for M. de Castries, after the queen had demanded the permission, and repeated to him what I had told the Queen, adding that he might remember, that two years since, at the departure of M. d'Ormeson, I had formally declared to him, that neither M. Necker or his friends need even entertain any thoughts of his being reinstated in his place; that if M. Necker remained quiet, and his friends abstained from making him the public topic, I should

leave him in tranquillity; but that if any noise were made on his account, or any means taken to thwart the operations of the government, I should consider myself as being attacked, and should then order him to go to Geneva, and return to France no more. I leave to your prudence to communicate what you think proper of this to the controller-general; I had some thoughts of speaking to him myselfon Thursday, but it would perhaps be too late. I depend upon his discretion, respecting the details which are here contained; he may observe, that M. Necker is personally an object of indifference to him, and that relying on my goodness and that of the queen, he fears nothing. But above all, let him beware of his friends, true or false; so long as he occupies himself only with public affairs, he may be tranquil. I cannot finish this letter without bringing to your recollection, that the (20) (10) of May is passed; I hope it will again pass like the last.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON LETTERS XI. XII. AND XIII.

As the three preceding letters have already been presented to the public with very extensive commentaries, it becomes unnecessary to make further observations. M. Necker's administration fills so considerable a part of the reign of Lewis the sixteenth, that it would require almost as many volumes as that celebrated ex-minister has written, to state all that might be said on the occasion. These letters prove how formidable a power M. Necker had become, since the whole force of the French cabinet was ineffectual to crush him; and the king in this instance stood firm against the unanimous solicitations of his counsellors, who were anxious for a striking display of royal despotism.

# LETTRE XIV.

*A M. de Vergennes.*

. . . . . 1783.

Je vous renvoie, monsieur, avec les interceptions ordinaires, les dépêches d'Espagne que vous m'avez envoyées. Nous nous attendions bien à la mauvaise humeur du ministre espagnol, quand il verroit que nous avions mieux vu que lui les événemens qui devoient arriver; mais il est bien fâcheux que cela tourne au détriment de la chose. M. d'Arando est bien indiscret, de nous faire souffrir de sa mauvaise humeur contre son pays : j'approuve le projet de M. Montmorin, que vous écriviez directement à M. *Florida Blanca;* vous n'avez qu'à en dresser la lettre, que vous lirez dans un comité où nous prendrons les déterminations qu'il faut sur les opérations ultérieures.

J'ai vu la reine après qu'elle vous a vu. Elle m'a paru fort affectée du sentiment d'inquiétude, bien juste, sur la guerre qui pourroit éclater, d'un moment à l'autre, entre deux rivaux si près l'un de l'autre; elle m'a parlé aussi de ce que vous n'aviez pas rien fait pour la prévenir. J'ai tâché de lui prouver que vous aviez fait ce qui étoit en vous; et que nous étions prêts à faire toutes les démarches amicales que la cour de Vienne pourroit nous suggérer; mais en même-temps, je ne lui ai pas laissé ignorer le peu de fondement que je voyois aux acquisitions de la maison d'Autriche, et que nous n'étions nullement obligés à la secourir pour les soutenir; et de plus, je l'ai bien assurée que le roi de *Prusse* ne pourroit pas nous détourner de l'alliance, et qu'on pouvoit désapprouver la conduite d'un allié, sans se brouiller avec lui. Elle avoit très-peu reçu de l'empereur et de l'impératrice, ainsi que de M. de Mercy. Tout cela est pour votre instruction, afin que vous puissiez parler le même langage. Je pense bien, comme vous, qu'il ne faut pas faire des démarches qui

donneroient une sanction à l'usurpation de la cour de Vienne, et je ne vois pas d'inconvénient à ce que vous avez dit à M. de Mercy.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTRE XIV.

*To M. de Vergennes.*

. . . . . 1783.

I return, Sir, with the ordinary interruptions, the dispatches from Spain which you sent me. We were well prepared for the ill humor of the Spanish minister, when he perceived that we had foreseen, better than himself, the events which were likely to take place; but it is extremely unfor-

tunate, that this should prove detrimental to the affair; and M. d'Arando is highly indiscreet in making us suffer on account of his ill humor against his country. I approve the project of M. Montmorin, that you should write directly to M. Florida Blanca, and you may compose a letter for that purpose, which you will read in a committee, where we will decide upon our future operations.

I saw the queen after she had seen you, and she appeared deeply affected by a sentiment of uneasiness well-founded on the probality of the war, which may break out between two rivals, placed so near each other. She also spoke to me of your having done nothing to prevent it. I endeavoured to prove to her, that you had done all you could, and that we were ready to adopt every friendly measure, which the court of Vienna could suggest. At the same time, I did not conceal from her, how little solid I considered the acquisitions of the House of Austria, and that we were in

no way obliged to lend our aid to maintain them; I moreover assured her, that the king of Prussia had no power of turning us from the alliance, and that it was possible to disapprove the conduct of an ally, without having any breach in consequence. She has received very little from the emperor, the empress, or M. de Mercy; these things I mention for your information, and in order that you may speak the same language. I think with you, that we must take no measures, which would give a sanction to the usurpations of the court of Vienna, and I see no impropriety in what what you have said to M. de Mercy.

LEWIS.

## OBSERVATIONS

### ON THE FOURTEENTH LETTER.

This letter, which has also been published, relates to the alliance between the cabinet of Versailles and the House of Austria in 1783, and to the projects of Joseph the second on Bavaria after the treaty at that epocha. Much importance has been attached to this letter, as displaying many facts unknown at that period, discovering the private sentiments of the king respecting the conduct of his ally, and presenting a faithful picture of the political relations between France and Vienna. But one of the most prominent characters of this letter is the ascendancy which the queen had now assumed in the cabinet. Ten years had elapsed in the struggle between this princess and her husband. Her passion for her house continued unabated, and it is curious to observe the secret intelligence between the monarch and his minister,

agreeing, that in their communications with her they should hold the same language.

These circumstances, which had an important though secondary influence on the affairs of France, are not unworthy of the notice of the historian.

## LETTRE XV.

### *A M. de Malesherbes.*

Versailles, 13 Déc., 1786.

J'AIME et j'estime les hommes, mon cher Malesherbes, qui, par des ouvrages utiles, prouvent qu'ils font un sage emploi de leurs lumières; mais je n'encouragerai jamais, par aucun bienfait particulier, les productions qui tendent à la démoralisation générale. Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot et leurs pareils qui, un instant, ont obtenu mon admiration, que j'ai su priser depuis, ont perverti la jeunesse qui lit avec ivresse, et la classe la plus nombreuse des hommes qui lisent sans réflexion. Sans doute, mon cher Malesherbes, la liberté de la presse agrandit la sphère des connoissances humaines; sans doute, il est à désirer que les gens de lettres puissent manifester leurs pensées, sans l'assentiment d'une censure quelconque; mais

les hommes sont toujours si au-delà du point où la sagesse devroit les arrêter, qu'il faut non-seulement une police sévère pour les livres, mais une surveillance active envers ceux qui sont chargés de les examiner, pour que les mauvais livres aient le moins de publicité possible. Je le sais, toute inquisition est odieuse, mais il faut un frein à la licence; car sans ce moyen, la religion et les mœurs perdroient bientôt de leur pouvoir, et la puissance royale de ce respect dont elle doit être toujours environnée. Nos philosophes modernes n'ont exalté les bienfaits de la liberté, que pour jeter avec plus d'adresse dans les esprits, des semences de rebellion. Prenons-y garde, nous aurons peut-être un jour à nous reprocher un peu trop d'indulgence pour les philosophes et pour leurs opinions. Je crains qu'ils ne séduisent la jeunesse, et qu'ils ne préparent bien de troubles à cette génération qui les protége. Les remontrances du clergé sont en partie fondées; je ne puis qu'applaudir à sa prévoyance. Vous avez promis en mon nom, dans l'assemblée du clergé,

de poursuivre les mauvais livres, les livres impies. Nous tiendrons notre promesse, parce que la philosophie trop audacieuse du siècle, a une arrière-pensée, qu'elle corrompt la jeunesse, et tend à tout troubler et à tout diviser.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER XV.

*To M. de Malesherbes.*

Versailles, Dec. 13, 1786.

I love and esteem those men, my dear Malesherbes, who prove, by the useful productions of their pen, that they employ their talents for worthy purposes; but I will never encourage, by any particular distinction

distinction, such works as tend to a general corruption of morals. Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, and other writers of the same cast, who obtained for a while my admiration, and whom I have since learned to appreciate, have perverted the young, who read with enthusiasm, and that class of society, which is the most numerous, who read without reflexion. The liberty of the press, my dear Malesherbes, no doubt enlarges the sphere of human knowledge; it is certainly to be wished, that men of letters might have the privileges of publishing their thoughts, without the obstacle of any censure whatever; but men are so apt to wander beyond that point where wisdom enjoins them to stop, that not only a severe police for books is necessary, but also a vigilant inspection over those, who are commissioned to examine them, in order that noxious books may obtain as little notoriety as possible. I know that every kind of inquisition is odious, but it is necessary to curb licentiousness; since if this be not done, religion and mo-

rals would soon lose their influence, and regal authority that respect, with which it should always be accompanied. Our modern philosophers have extolled the blessings of liberty, only to insinuate more easily into the minds of men the seeds of rebellion. Let us beware; we shall, perhaps, one day have to reproach ourselves with too much indulgence towards philosophers and their opinions. I fear they may seduce the young, and are preparing many troubles for the generation, by which they are protected. The remonstrances of the clergy are in part well founded, and I cannot but applaud their foresight. You have promised the assembly of the clergy in my name, to prosecute hurtful and impious books; we will keep our word: for the too daring philosophy of the age has a project in reserve, while it corrupts youth, and tends towards general trouble and disorder.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE FIFTEENTH LETTER.

Among the persons who have taken a distinguished part in the revolution, few are entitled to unqualified esteem and veneration, like M. de Malesherbes. M. Turgot's services towards the public appear to have terminated with his ministry. M. de Malesherbes, though long withdrawn from the business of the cabinet, occupies himself continually in giving his royal pupil instruction and counsels. This letter to M. de Malesherbes appears to contain an answer to remonstrances made by the ex-minister on some severe display of authority against the philosophical writers of the day, for which severity the king justifies himself by a confession of faith respecting philosophers and their works.

This letter is extremely interesting under various points of view. It discovers a con-

siderable portion of candor in the king with respect to the propagation of liberal and rational sentiments on the subject both of civil and religious liberty; and much may be allowed to the justice of his observations, when he descants on the abuses which at the time were made of those inestimable privileges. The king appears to have been once an admirer of the works of Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, and others, but who can disapprove the temperate resolution he had formed of withholding encouragement from productions, which he believed tended to the general corruption of the people. The apologists for those writers will tell us, that in combating despotism and superstition, the weapons they wielded were such as were best fitted to produce effect, and that ridicule, according to the Roman poet, was stronger and more efficacious than serious or severe argument.

There are, no doubt, certain prejudices so inherent that it requires the exercise of every various faculty of the human mind to eradicate them; but it must be remembered,

that Milton, Locke, and Sidney overthrew the despotism of the Stuarts without the aid of ribaldry or licentiousness, and that the illustrious reformers of the fifteenth century confirmed the morality of Europe, while they beat down the arrogant pretensions of sacerdotal and papal usurpation. In the course of the present revolution, the philosophers have mistaken the true point; and if the period ever arrives when despotism or superstition (which heaven avert) should regain their wonted ascendancy, part of the blame might justly be imputed to the philosophers, who have contributed so greatly, as the king observes, towards the general demoralisation.

What friend to a just and tempered freedom, to a manly and rational system of religion, but must regard the misapplied labors, the ignorant ardor of such ill-advised advocates, not merely with disapprobation, but with abhorrence? What censures do not these pretenders to reformation in this and other countries incur, when, by their intemperate sallies, they create apologies for

those, who, shrinking from the gulf of annihilation, fall back for an asylum into the arms of superstition and despotism. Against these last enemies we might have hoped to struggle with success, and even to subdue them; but let us never cease exclaiming with Jaffier,—"Save me from my friends!"

The homage rendered by the king to the liberty of the press does him honor, though it appears to have been in this place only an assent to the principle recorded in the ex-minister's remonstrance. "Without doubt, my dear Malesherbes," says the monarch, "the liberty of the press enlarges the sphere of human knowledge; it were, undoubtedly, to be wished, that men of letters should manifest their opinions without any permission whatever." So far the king and his philosophic instructor are agreed; but though we may admit with the former that men are liable to go beyond the point where they ought to stop, however difficult it may be to state what the true point of repose should be, we are very sure that the remedy

which he proposes is more dire than the disease.

The force of this truth immediately presents itself to his mind. "I know," adds he, "that all inquisition is odious; but the licentiousness of the times calls for restraint." No problem in government has been more difficult to solve than that of the just measure of the liberty of the press. On this topic both argument and declamation have been exhausted, and though this liberty has been recognised one of the primordial and imprescriptible rights of citizens, few governments, calling themselves free, appear yet to have fixed it on its proper basis. In the despotic states of Europe, such as France under the monarchy, the principle was admitted as desirable, but no restraint was thought of, except that of the police; an inquisition which the person most interested in the restraint regarded as odious. There are states, however, where due respect is paid to this inestimable privilege, and while the right of decision by juries is maintained, notwithstanding the temporary interference

of authority, the rights of citizens will remain inviolate.

But while the king inveighs against the infidelity and licentiousness of the modern philosophers, we see him at the same time passing an eulogium on the foresight of his clergy. This pretorian guard of despotism had long since justly taken the alarm.—This provident and vigilant band had long seen Hannibal at the gates. The king reminds M. de Malesherbes of the engagement he had taken in his name with this sacred order, to prosecute immoral and impious publications. The minister, it appears, had been negligent in this part of his duty; the king reminds him of his promise; but before we condemn M. de Malesherbes, it would be but reasonable to take a slight survey of some portions of the impiety which he was called on to repress or punish. For those we must look into the indictments drawn up against philosophy and philosophers, contained in the acts of remonstrance of the clergy.

Eleven years previous to the writing of this letter the king appointed commissaries to hear those complaints. "Infidelity," says the deputation, at the head of which was the Archbishop of Toulouse, "invades every age, every rank, every condition. A monstrous atheism has become the prevailing opinion." An eloquent *tirade* against infidelity and atheism follows this denunciation, and many of the observations made by those learned prelates respecting the fatal consequences of this laxity of religious belief, were no doubt well founded. But though this impiety was pregnant with various mischiefs, there was another aberration from the unity of the faith, which called for no less strong repression from the arm of the civil power. This foe to established religion and social order was Protestantism. "This sect," adds the deputation, "overwhelmed for a long time past under the anathema of two powers, has dared again to raise its head. Intimidated heretofore by the severity of the laws, checked by the unceasing vigilance which watched all its projects, it sought the solitude of the deserts,

and found its protection in the shades of night. Now it raises the standard of schism, its preachers publish their fanatical maxims; they celebrate the holy communion and the sacrament of marriage."

"We do not, Sire, seek to inquire into the liberty which the protestants enjoy. Let your Majesty deign to inform yourself why, in contempt of authority, these sectaries make temples of their houses; why, in some provinces, they have dared to build without fearing the interposition of government?"

"Let it be made known to you, Sire, why unions, reprobated by all laws, canonical and civil, are contracted with impunity at their preachings, under the name of marriage? And how it happens, that, contrary to the will of the prince, tender infants are every day torn from the ministers of our holy religion to be placed under the care of those masters of error, who make them quietly suck in its poison with their milk? Who thus emboldens these doctors of falshood, sacrilegious imitators of our ministry, to usurp

the name and rights of *Pastors of the holy church*?..... We conjure you, Sire, delay not a moment to deprive error of the hope of possessing temples and altars amongst us; finish the work which Lewis the great (Lewis the fourteenth) had undertaken, and which Lewis the well-beloved (Lewis the fifteenth) continued. The glory of giving Calvinism its last and mortal blow is reserved for you....."

The complaint made by the clergy of the daring boldness of protestants, in taking children from under the tutelage of catholic priests, was no doubt well founded. The protestants, emboldened by the liberality of the times, were sometimes guilty of this outrage against the laws. Under the old regime, the offspring of protestants were for ever illegitimate; since that holy union, called marriage, in other countries, was here for those sectaries unknown and disallowed: this miserable offspring, condemned to infamy by its birth, had no refuge for final salvation but in the bosom of the church. From this asylum the protestants were sometimes guilty of stealing their own children; and who that

had any respect for the sacredness of religious opinion or feelings for parental solicitude, however erroneous, but must readily have pardoned them for the violation.

Five years after this epocha, in 1780, the zeal of the clergy led them to repeat their grievances. "It is the duty of our ministry, Sire, to fix at first the attention of your Majesty on the cruel and deep wounds inflicted on the whole body of revealed truths, by a doctrine hostile to every worship and destructive of all authority. Alas! this is not the only calamity which has befallen the Gallican church. Heresy grows every day more haughty and enterprising under the shade of lengthened impunity, and is unwearied in rending the bosom of this tender and distressed mother. During the glorious days of the reign of your august grandfather, a provident administration had, by means purely repressive, checked and even enlightened our strayed brethren. Numberless conversions had already excited the soothing hope, that all the sheep of Israel would form but one flock under the guidance of one single shepherd,

when the salutary springs of a police combined with so much wisdom insensibly became relaxed."

"However slight the attention paid to the complaints laid successively at the feet of the throne since the year 1745 by the assemblies of the clergy, the daring strides of the sectaries present sensible augmentations, and a most dreadful progression..... Formerly, Sire, the sectaries were rigorously excluded, according to the ordinances, from places, civil employments, etc..... now the infractions are multiplied. — Heretofore the sectaries held no religious assemblies, or secretly convoked them in solitary and desert places.... at present the holding of assemblies is notorious and regular. Preachings, established at the gates of our largest towns, insult the laws by tumultuous singing, and noisy ceremonies. The kingdom is inundated by false teachers, who do not hesitate, and without mystery, to administer the communion to the sick, and spread publications, under the form of exhortations and instructions, respecting the great events of the nation..... They

have the audacity in some provinces even to deliver acts of baptism and marriage, dressed up with an air of authenticity, in virtue of superior orders given at the beginning of the year 1774 (under the ministry of Turgot and Malesherbes), which orders are not yet revoked, notwithstanding the indignation which the late king evinced on this subject..... Formerly these sectaries did not permit themselves to dogmatise in public: now every day is marked, as it were, by new irreverences against our ceremonies and mysteries.... Here the venerable symbol of our redemption has been broken down!..... There horrible blasphemies against the adorable Eucharist have been proferred! Further on, old catholics have torn themselves away from the restraining yoke of our morality, and thrown themselves scandalously into the arms of a free and independent sect!.... Let us dwell in short on the enterprises of the protestants, carried on with new and unexampled audacity; let us examine the numberless writings composed in their favor, and distributed with singular profusion; let us lend an ear to the general cry which re-

sounds from every part of France; it seems as if the church were threatened to share empire with a haughty rival, and that the country will have the pain of seeing altar against altar erected in its bosom..... "

After some further detail of the calamities of the catholic church from the audaciousness of protestantism, and echoing the hackneyed observation of the immortal bishop of Meaux (Bossuet), "that modern incredulity was a detestable shoot from the fatal stock planted in the sixteenth century by the leaders of the reformation," and which they might have found on a closer examination to have been rather an offset from the mysterious and monstrous trunk of papal absurdity, those doctors go on to observe, that "the diversity of public worship is almost always a dreadful source of civil dissention." "Let us suppose," say they, "that the memorable event consummated in the last century (the revocation of the edict of Nantz), by a monarch so profound in the art of reigning, has really produced the pretended evils alledged by its detractors, by introducing into foreign coun-

tries immense treasures, flourishing colonies, and the precious knowledge of our arts and manufactures, how shall we repair such losses after the lapse of an hundred years? Would it not be exasperating the wound, instead of closing it, to attempt, by a second operation, to rob us of the great advantages which have consoled us for the loss of the former? Such we call the unity of religious worship, and the stability of civil order. What new titles to the beneyolence of kings will this assemblage of independent men have acquired, who boasted formerly in their seditious writings, of having discovered that the source of royal authority was purely human, whilst the catholic doctrine places the cradle of this same authority in heaven, and represents it as covered with the rays of the Divinity itself."

Were these acts of the assemblies of the clergy less authenticated, it would seem incredible, that at the close of the eighteenth century, and in a civilized country like France, there could be found a body of men who would have ventured their reputation as authors of such a medley

medley of moral and political blasphemies. It ought, however, to be noticed in honor of this forbearance, that while they loudly called for the repression of heresy, they abjured all appeal to the halter and the sword, since, as they declared, the ecclesiastical state was of all professions the most essentially remote from acts of rigor. One mode of conversion, however, they earnestly recommended, which was that of bounties towards new converts; but that "no new pensions should be created but on the sight of an abjuration in good form, or some other equivalent title, with an obligation to represent every year a certificate of catholicism, signed, without expence, by the vicar of the parish to which the convert should belong;" to which mode nothing was objectionable, excepting the premium which fanaticism paid for hypocrisy.

Whether the king at this period had not discontinued "his admiration of the writings of Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, and writers of the like sort," or whether he had more wisdom than the collected body of his clergy,

we find in the margin of this remonstrance certain notes, which betray a lurking disposition in favor of this heresy, which the priesthood was so anxious to extirpate. In one place the king observes; "It seems singular to see complaints against the protestants, because they manifest their joy when Providence gives me a son, or when I gain a victory over the English. To what lengths are men carried by their prejudices!" and in another, that "Bishops, well worthy of confidence, have assured me, that surreptitious conversions are contrary to the spirit of religion, and that in order to be praise-worthy, they ought to be the result of a free and enlightened conscience."

The genuine catholicism of the king at this period (catholicism in the restrained sense of the word), might almost be doubted. Among the accusations brought against the protestants in this last remonstrance was that of a direr heresy than mere Calvinism. "Without invoking in this place," say they, "public notoriety, or taking advantage of the

confessions which have escaped the discretion of the most celebrated Calvinists, have we not seen the school of Geneva present three years since the scandalous spectacle of a public and uncontroverted thesis, in which it has not blushed to call in question the divinity of Jesus Christ, the immutable limit which has always separated simple deism from true christianity?" Without calling in question this last assertion of the clergy on the doctrinal position which they laid down, and which discovers more ignorance of christianity than might be allowed to so learned a body, the king contents himself with simply observing, that "the protestants might equally well find fault with the theses of the abbé de Prades." Now these theses of the abbé de Prades were disquisitions in favor of pure materialism, which in France, where little is understood of religious controversy, means atheism, held at the Sorbonne; of which doctrine one of the supporters at the time was the archbishop of Toulouse, the chief of the deputation of the clergy in their remonstrance against the protestants.

"As long as these reproaches shall continue," adds the king, "there can be no hope of seeing any reconciliation effected. The two religions ought to edify one another by good actions, and not exasperate by offensive accusations whether true or false." Though it might reasonably be called in question whether the king was as zealous a catholic as was requisite for an eldest son of the church, there can be no doubt that he was at this time more christian and more truly philosophic than his clergy.

Six years after this last remonstrance, we find the king abjuring his heterodox opinions, at least respecting philosophy. "Our modern philosophers," says he, "have exalted the blessings of their liberty, with the intention only of sowing with more dexterity in the mind the seeds of rebellion. Let us take care; we shall have at some future day to reproach ourselves with too much indulgence for philosophers and their opinions. I fear lest they should seduce our youth, and prepare many troubles to this generation which

protects them. The remonstrances of the clergy are in part founded..... The too daring philosophy of the times has a purpose in reserve."

The event, which the prophetic soul of the king deprecated, was fast approaching. It might, indeed, be said to be already consummated; and no doubt, when six years afterwards in the gloomy prison of the temple he dictated his defence to Malesherbes, some of those observations respecting the too plenary indulgence granted to philosophers glided across his remembrance. It is common with the unhappy to attribute events to causes which have no necessary connexion with the object. It was not philosophy enlightening the people which brought on those fatal catastrophes, of which the philosophers themselves were the victims, but that deplorable ignorance which despotism loves to foster as the surest means of enforcing obedience, and which, when loosened from restraint, becomes a direr despot in its turn. If the accusation of corrupting the people by impious

and licentious publications be one of the faults from which certain writers can with difficulty exculpate themselves, what apologies have we not to offer, what applauses rather have we not to bestow on those, who by their labors tended to correct this odious and intolerant spirit, which we see exhibited in the remonstrances of the clergy.

# LETTRE XVI.

## *A M. de Malesherbes.*

Paris, 28 Décembre, 1786.

L'AUTORITÉ a toujours besoin, mon cher Malesherbes, d'être environnée de respect. Le zèle indiscret de quelques magistrats; les écrits virulens de quelques gens de lettres relativement aux lettres de cachet, est un scandale. Les parlemens qui, depuis environ trente ans, se sont imaginés que l'autorité royale a besoin de leur sanction pour punir légalement, ont pris part dans la querelle, et l'ont rendue plus grave. Je ne crois pas devoir céder, quoique vos sages avis me soient présens, et que vous vous soyez déclaré contre les lettres de cachet. Je n'aurois point fait usage, le premier, de l'œuvre du père Joseph; mais j'ai pensé que dans le siècle où nous sommes, il ne faut point détruire la seule force répressive dont

j'ai nécessairement besoin dans certaines circonstances. Je sais qu'il y a d'étranges abus dans la manière de faire usage des lettres de cachet; mais quelle est la chose dont on n'abuse pas? L'ouvrage de M. de Mirabeau sur les prisons d'état, que j'ai lu avec attention, renferme des vues profondes. Je regrette vivement que l'auteur, par son inconduite, m'empêche de croire à ses principes philantropiques. Il n'en faut pas moins, mon cher Malesherbes, profiter de tout ce que vous trouverez d'utile dans son ouvrage, puis bien se convaincre des abus, et remédier promptement au mal. Présentez-moi donc vos vues régénératrices dans cette partie, et je me ferai un devoir de les méditer.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER XVI.

*To M. de Malesherbes.*

Paris, Dec. 28, 1786.

AUTHORITY, my dear Malesherbes, stands always in need of being surrounded with respect; and the indiscreet zeal of some magistrates, together with the virulent writings of some men of letters, respecting *lettres de cachet*, is scandalous. The parliaments, who, during the last thirty years, have imagined that the royal authority stood in need of their sanction to inflict legal punishment, have taken part in the quarrel, and rendered it more serious. I do not think I ought to yield, although your wise counsels are present to my mind, and you have declared yourself against *lettres de cachet*. I should never have been the first to make

use of this invention of father Joseph, but I think, that in the age in which we live, it would be wrong to annihilate the only repressive force at my disposal, and for which I have necessarily occasion in certain circumstances. Strange abuses, I know, exist in the manner of employing *lettres de cachet;* but what is not subject to abuse? The work of M. Mirabeau on state-prisons contains deep views, and I regret that the conduct of the author prevents me from placing confidence in his philanthropic principles. You must, nevertheless, my dear Malesherbes, avail yourself of whatever you find useful in this performance, in order to ascertain the abuses, and apply a a prompt remedy to the evil. Furnish me therefore, with your regenerating ideas on the subject, on which I shall consider it as my duty to meditate.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE SIXTEENTH LETTER.

In the last letter we find the king warm in his invectives against the philosophers. That letter appears to have been the preliminary of the present, where he justifies his conduct to M. de Malesherbes in punishing them. It has already been observed, that when M. de Malesherbes entered into administration, one of the conditions which he rigidly exacted was the abolition of *lettres de cachet.* The impression made on the king's mind by the eloquent picture which the minister drew in his memorial on that subject, and the still more persuasive arguments which he exhibited in the victims of royal or ministerial vengeance, had been somewhat effaced during the lapse of ten or twelve years; and as philosophy had since that period become louder in its pretensions, the king prepares to put those instruments

of terror into execution, and warns M. de Malesherbes of his intentions.

But it was not a few insulated men of letters with whom the king had now to contend. The doctrine proclaimed by M. de Malesherbes respecting *lettres de cachet* had penetrated the courts of justice, and the parliament was now in insurrection against this arbitrary mode of procedure. The king begins his letter by informing the ex-minister, that authority has always need of being surrounded with respect. If by respect the king means the sentiment which arises from love and attachment, he was in the right; but if, as the context too clearly evinces, respect was unconditional submission, he could not have proffered a doctrine at that period more subversive of authority itself.

It is probable, that this detestable usage of despotism had been suggested to the king by some around him, who fancied that the surest principle of governing was that of force. In the last letter we find the clergy

active in setting before him the example of his predecessors, in the most terrible and impolitic exercise of their power. The contradictions and inconsistencies into which the king falls while he is writing this letter to M. de Malesherbes, prove that he was speaking against his better feelings. He virtually acknowledges the illegality of the act, in which he confesses there were strange abuses. He admires the observations of Mirabeau against *lettres de cachet*; they contain profound views; but he regrets the immoral conduct of the statesman, as if there was any necessary connection between the writer and the important subject on which he treats.

But if the king was sometimes irresolute in his perseverance to do good, it is but justice to admit, that he always hesitates when about to commit evil. He is struck with the enormity of the act which he thinks of perpetrating; he feels the horror of depriving men of their personal liberty without the formalities of justice; his mind revolts against those deeds of despotism which

are familiar only to tyrants. He consults M. de Malesherbes as his state confessor, and implores his regenerating views on this most interesting of civil concerns, on which he promises to meditate. Happy in some degree the country where men of independence and probity are permitted to step in between power and its victim, and instruct the former, that the personal safety of citizens is the most inestimable and most sacred of rights; but far happier the state where the law is the equal protector of all, and where such interference becomes unnecessary, since there no such power can exist.

## LETTRE XVII.

*A M. Berthier, intendant de Paris.*

Paris, 28 Décembre, 1788.

Vous avez présenté à mon conseil d'état, un projet dicté par la plus pure philantropie. J'aime beaucoup vos moyens pour extirper la mendicité de mes États. Utiliser les pauvres, mais ne point ajouter à leurs infortunes; élever des lieux de retraite où l'humanité dicte des lois, où la sagesse veille, où l'amour du travail soit récompensé, où la jeunesse active soit toujours occupée, et la vieillesse souffrante soulagée; voilà le motif, le but de votre projet. La corvée est abolie, mais les routes exigent un entretien continuel et dispendieux; vos hospices de mendians valides ne pourroient-ils pas fournir les ouviers travailleurs qui seroient chargés d'entretenir les routes,

d'en construire des nouvelles. Je vois dans ces lieux de retraite des armées de pioniers se former, parcourir les campagnes : stationnés sur les grandes routes, ils remédieront à l'intempérie des saisons, aux accidens, et entretiendront une libre circulation dans toute la France. Il me paroît cependant que vous vous êtes trop peu occupé des moyens les moins onéreux pour le peuple, de fournir à l'entretien de vos établissemens en faveur de la mendicité. Le peuple n'est déjà que trop accablé d'impôts; faut-il le surcharger encore, et rendre nul le bienfait de l'abolition de la corvée. Cherchons le mode le moins dispendieux, le plus agréable au peuple, et qui puisse remplir l'objet que vous vous proposez; soulager les contribuables, utiliser les pauvres, et pourvoir à l'entretien des routes. Vos connoissances, monsieur, vous fourniront sans doute de nouveaux moyens; soyez persuadé que je les appuierai dans mon conseil.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER XVII.

*To M. Berthier, intendant of Paris.*

Paris, October 28, 1788.

You have presented to my council of state a plan dictated by the purest philanthropy, and I approve highly the means you suggest of extirpating mendicity from my states. To render the poor useful, without increasing their misfortunes; to establish places of retreat with humane regulations, and under wise direction, where the love of labor shall be encouraged, where active youth shall be occupied, and infirm old age comforted; such are the motives, and such the aim of your project. The *corvée* is abolished, but the highways require continual and expensive repairs might not your hospitals of mendicants

furnish workmen to mend and construct roads? I see whole armies of pioneers formed in those asylums, scouring the country, and stationed on the highways, where they will provide against accidents, and the ravages of the seasons, and maintain a free circulation throughout all France. You seem to me, however, not to have paid sufficient attention to the means the least burdensome to the people, for furnishing what is necessary for the support of your establishments in favor of mendicity. The people are already too much oppressed, by taxes; must their burdens be so increased as to render unavailing the benefit of the abolition of the *corvées*. Let us make choice of the mode the least expensive, the most agreeable to the people, and by which the ends you propose can be accomplished, of disburdening those who pay taxes, rendering the poor useful, and keeping the roads in good repair.

Your abilities, Sir, will no doubt furnish you with new means, and be assured I shall second them in my council.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE SEVENTEENTH LETTER.

While the king applauds M. Berthier for his projects of rooting out mendicity from the state, he observes to him with great justice, that this benefit ought not to be conferred at the expence of the public. Under the old regime, it was only by making beggars contribute to the common stock by their labors, that this scourge could be removed from society; but whether the mode of making them work on the high roads was the best means of effecting this good intention, is very doubtful. Beggars are seldom industrious, and the earnings of their labor could scarcely have rewarded the time of their overseers. The revolution has provided in another mode for this once numerous portion of the people; the condition of the poorer classes being so ameliorated as to render mendicity scarcely any longer the

object of legislative attention. This letter serves, however, to prove how great an interest the king felt in the fate of the lowest orders of his subjects, and that his mind was continually occupied in purposes of doing good.

M. Berthier's philanthropy, though praised by the king, was far differently understood by those who were the objects of his solicitude. He was one among the few persons who were sacrificed to the fury of the populace in the very first days of the revolution. The crime imputed to him was that of monopolizing corn destined for the capital, which act has never been disproved; but his death was attended by circumstances of barbarity which would disgrace the least civilized nation.

## LETTRE XVIII.

*A M. de Lavoisier.*

15 Mars, 1789.

Votre dernière expérience, monsieur, fixe encore toute mon admiration : cette découverte prouve que vous avez agrandi la sphère des connoissances utiles. Vos expériences sur le gaz inflammable prouvent combien vous vous occupez de cette science admirable qui, tous les jours, fait de nouveaux progrès.

La reine et quelques personnes que je désire rendre témoins de votre découverte, se réuniront dans mon cabinet demain à sept heures du soir. Vous me ferez plaisir de m'apporter le traité des gaz inflammables.

Vous connoissez, monsieur, toute mon estime pour vous.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER XVIII.

*To M. de Lavoisier.*

March 15th, 1789.

Your last experiment, Sir, still excites my admiration; this discovery proves, that you have enlarged the sphere of human knowledge. Your experiments on inflammable gaz shew how much you are occupied by that admirable science, which every day makes new progress.

The queen and some persons, to whom I wish your experiment to be shewn, will meet in my cabinet to-morrow at seven in the evening, and you will give me pleasure by bringing me the treatise on inflammable gaz.

You know, Sir, how much you possess my esteem.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE EIGHTEENTH LETTER.

THE experiments which this celebrated philosopher is here invited to repeat before the king and his family, form the basis of the French system of chemistry; but although they met with the royal approbation, and since with the adherence of almost the whole of the chemical world, this system yet wants the sanction of that illustrious experimentalist who first laid the foundation on which this aerial superstructure is reared.

But leaving the fate of these gazes to the impartial investigation of the scientific world, who can help deploring that of M. Lavoisier, and heaving a groan of execration against his hideous murderers? He is invited in this letter by the king to repeat his experiments before the queen and persons of the court: four years afterwards, he re-

quested from his executioners the respite of a fortnight, to wait the result of a series of important experiments he had begun. But his assassins did not understand his appeal; their only science of government was confiscation, their only experiment the scaffold.

# LETTRE XIX.

*Billet adressé au comte d'Artois.*

13 Juillet, 1789, 11 heures du matin.

J'AVOIS cédé, mon cher frère, à vos sollicitations, aux représentations de quelques sujets fidèles; mais j'ai fait d'utiles réflexions. Résister en ce moment, ce seroit s'exposer à perdre la monarchie; c'est nous perdre tous. J'ai rétracté les ordres que j'avois donnés; mes troupes quitteront Paris; j'emploîrai des moyens plus doux. Ne me parlez plus d'un coup d'autorité, d'un grand acte de pouvoir; je crois plus prudent de temporiser, de céder à l'orage, et de tout attendre du temps, du réveil des gens de bien, et l'amour des Français pour leur roi.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER XIX.

*Note addressed to the Count d'Artois.*

July 13, 1789, 11 oclock in the morning.

I HAD yielded, my dear brother, to your solicitations and to the representations of a few faithful subjects, but I have since made some prudent reflexions. [To resist at present, would be to risk the loss of the monarchy, and the ruin of us all. I have therefore countermanded the orders I had given.] My troops will retreat from Paris, and I shall employ milder measures. Talk to me no more of an act of authority, of a great stroke of power; I believe it is most prudent to temporise, to yield to the storm, and expect every thing from time, from the awakened courage of the good, and the love of Frenchmen for their king.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE NINETEENTH LETTER.

The revolution which had been so long in preparation was now about to take place. This letter to the Count d'Artois was written on the eve of that great day, which forms a most important epocha in modern history. For the better understanding of this letter, it may be necessary to take a very slight retrospect of the part which the king's brother had acted in the momentous events which had occurred during the two preceding months.

When it was discovered that the Notables, who had been convoked by M. de Calonne, were unwilling or inefficient to remedy the disorders of the state, M. Necker was recalled to the ministry, and the convocation of the states-general was ordered. The assembly of the representatives of the people

excited, as was reasonable, great alarm among the privileged orders; but as this convocation was indispensable, projects were formed by the parliaments, the nobility, and the clergy, to render their interference of as little weight as possible. The mode suggested was that of following the regulation of the last convocation of the states in 1614, when the deputies of the *tiers état* were equal or little superior in number to each of the other two orders. The notables were also of this opinion, except that division of which the Duke of Rochefaucault was member, and of which the king's eldest brother was president, who appears to have entertained in this instance a due regard for the rights of the people. The hostile projects of the Count d'Artois were not dissembled at that period, but the will of the minister and the orders of the king bore down all opposition, and it was determined that the number of the deputies of the people should equal that of the two other orders; the more important question of the mode of voting, whether by orders or by individuals, remained yet undecided.

The reception which the deputies of the *tiers état* on the opening of the states-general met with from the nobles, the clergy, and the court, presented no very flattering hopes of good to be effected by this reunion. The instructions given to the deputies of the people by their constituents were filled with reclamations, which excited the alternate rage and contempt of the two other orders. Their expulsion was already mentioned as an affair determined; but to give this act more solemnity, the Count d'Artois, at the head of the princes, among whom, however, must be excepted his brother and the Dukes of Penthievre and Orleans, presented to the king a manifesto levelled against the popular deputation. A second manifesto followed rapidly the former, threatening a general insurrection of the nobility, the chief of which threatened insurrection it was not difficult to guess; nor was it more difficult to conjecture that the first occasion would be eagerly seized to erect their memorials into banners of revolt, as soon as a sufficient number of champions had rallied around them.

The nobles and clergy persevered in their refusal to join the *tiers état*; each order verified its powers in separate chambers, nor was any respect paid to the frequent invitations given by the deputation of the people to those of the clergy and noblesse. Wearied with the constancy of those refusals, the members of the *tiers état* constituted themselves the assembly of the commons, declaring themselves the representatives of the nation, having the right of deliberating alone, and of accomplishing, if the other orders persisted in their refusal, the regeneration of France! This act of vigor encouraged the minority of the two other orders, who were anxious for the reunion, to declare themselves; a measure which the majority undertook to prevent, by soliciting the king to hold a royal sitting, in which he should dictate his supreme will; which sitting was destined by the party who provoked it, to be the prelude of the speedy dissolution of the states.

The deputies, who were enjoined to suspend their meetings on the pretence of

preparing their hall for the ceremony, assembled in the Tennis court of Versailles, where passed that memorable oath, pronounced first by Bailly, of never separating themselves till they had effected the reform.

The inconvenience of the building leading them to repair to the church of St. Lewis at Versailles, they were there joined by the minority of the two other orders, on which event the assembly of the commons took the name of the national assembly. The 23d of June, the day of the royal sitting, at length arrived, and the reception which the deputation of the people met with indicated every hostile intention against them. The king informed them, in a tone of no great persuasion, that he could effect without their aid what remained to be effected; and the rest of the ceremonial discovered, that the popular representation had nothing to rely on but the greatness of their object, and the justice of their cause.

The deputies remaining assembled after the royal sitting had broken up, the master

of ceremonies of the court ordered them in the name of the king to withdraw from the chamber. *The nation assembled,* replied Bailly, *has no orders to receive.* A new injunction to separate soon followed the former, and an answer, more personally indignant on the part of Mirabeau, confirmed the refusal of Bailly. A tumult of the people took place at Versailles on the report of those transactions, which tumult was appeased by M. Necker. The national assembly was recruited every day by fresh forces from the other orders; but the court was not less occupied than the people. The inhabitants of Paris and Versailles saw troops collecting in their neighbourhood, surrounding them on every side; and as soon as the forces were completed for the part they had to perform, the Count d'Artois, by insulting M. Necker, whom he influenced the king to order once more into exile, began the hostilities he had been so eager to provoke.

The Parisians, menaced by these warlike preparations, and seeing every quarter of the capital filling with foreign troops, ready

to

to execute the orders they had received, flew to arms. It was at this critical moment that the king, affrighted by the idea of the instant ruin he was bringing on his country, ordered the retreat of the troops from Paris. This letter to the Count d'Artois instructs us who were the principal actors in this perilous enterprise, and the expression used by the king leads us to suspect, that he was perfectly aware of the danger, since it was less the attack on which he now meditated, than the evil arising from resistance. The people, indeed, had no warlike bands to aid them, but he felt that they had what outweighed all the proud combinations of military force. Against a nation armed with enthusiasm, with indignation, with hope, what could avail the stroke of authority, or the tremendous act of power which the Count d'Artois was so strenuous to recommend? The king had reasoned wisely, and counted the cost. Once, therefore, amidst all his acts of inconstancy and irresolution, he had stumbled happily upon perseverance; and if he forbore to attempt the exercise of power, because attack or resistance would

have lost himself and the monarchy, some credit is due to his courage in having resisted the solicitation and impetuosity of those, who by a stroke of despotic authority would have involved both in remediless destruction.

# LETTRE XX.

*A M. l'archévêque d'Arles.*

Ce 26 Août, 1789.

Je suis content de cette démarche noble, grande et généreuse des deux premiers ordres de l'Etat. Ils ont fait de grands sacrifices pour la réconciliation générale, pour leur patrie, pour leur Roi. Je porte dans mon cœur tout ce qui a été fait dans cette séance, où tous les priviléges ont été sacrifiés. Le sacrifice est beau ; mais je ne puis que l'admirer : je ne consentirai jamais à dépouiller mon clergé, ma noblesse ; à priver l'un des droits acquis à l'église gallicane par une antique possession, par le vœu des fidèles, par les dons des rois mes aïeux ; à souffrir que l'autre soit dépouillée de tout ce qui faisoit sa gloire, du prix de ses services ; de ces titres, de ces récompenses

dues aux vertus civiques et guerrières de la noblesse française. De belles actions leur avoient mérité des priviléges; le roi de France doit les leur conserver. Je ne donnerai point ma sanction à des décrets qui les dépouilleroient; c'est alors que le peuple français pourroit un jour m'accuser d'injustice ou de foiblesse. M. l'archevêque, vous vous soumettez aux décrets de la Providence; je crois m'y soumettre en ne me livrant point à cet enthousiasme qui s'est emparé de tous les ordres, mais qui ne fait que glisser sur mon ame. Je ferai tout ce qui dépendra de moi pour conserver mon clergé, ma noblesse. Si la volonté du peuple se prononçoit, j'aurois fait mon devoir; si la force m'obligeoit de sanctionner, alors je céderois. Mais alors il n'y auroit plus en France ni monarchie, ni monarque; et ces deux choses ne peuvent subsister, qu'aux lieux où le clergé forme un ordre auguste et respecté, où la noblesse jouit de quelque considération, et peut se placer entre le peuple et le Roi. Les momens sont difficiles, je le sais, M. l'archevêque; et c'est

ici que nous avons besoin des lumières du ciel. Daignez les solliciter, nous serons exaucés.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER XX.

*To the archbishop of Arles.*

August 26th, 1789.

I AM satisfied with the great, noble, and generous proceeding of the two first orders of the state; they have made an immense sacrifice towards a general reconciliation, both for their country and their king. I feel engraven on my heart the transactions of that sitting in which all privileges were

renounced. But this sacrifice, however splendid, I can only admire, for I never will consent to despoil my clergy and nobility. I will not deprive the former of the rights which the Gallican church has acquired by ancient possession, by the voice of the faithful, and by the munificence of my royal ancestors; nor will I suffer the latter to be stripped of all that constituted their glory, of the rewards of their services, of those titles, those recompenses due to the civil and military virtues of the French nobility. They have merited by great actions those privileges, which it is the duty of the king of France to defend, and I will never give my sanction to decrees, which tend to their annihilation; since were I capable of doing so, the French nation might well accuse me one day of injustice or weakness. You, my lord archbishop, submit yourself to the decrees of Providence, while I believe that I manifest also my submission, by not abandoning myself to the torrent of enthusiasm which hurries on all the different orders of the state, but

which only glides lightly over the surface of my soul. I will do all in my power to preserve my clergy and my nobility, and should the will of the people decide against it, I shall have fulfilled my duty. If superior force obliges me to grant my sanction, I must yield; but there will then remain in France neither monarchy or monarch, things which can only exist where the clergy form a venerable and august order, and where the nobility enjoy a certain preponderance, and can place themselves between the king and the people. I know, my lord, that the moment is critical, we stand in need of the illumination of heaven; deign to invoke that illumination, and we shall be heard from above.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE TWENTIETH LETTER.

The events of the fourteenth of July, and the following days, had filled the court with consternation, and precipitated the flight of such of the princes and chiefs as had been most zealous for the exercise of what the king in the last letter calls "strokes of authority," and "great acts of power." But although M. Necker had been recalled from exile, and a general armament throughout the kingdom had followed the first insurrectional movement, no security was felt that the revolution which had begun would be carried into effect. The expressions *Law* and *Liberty* were on every lip, but the government yielded none of its prerogatives, and those of the privileged orders yet remained untouched. Apprehensions were even entertained that the enthusiasm which had been excited might wear away, and that those

who were interested in the continuance of abuses might join with the court, now recovering from its astonishment, to confirm them.

These apprehensions, so far as they respected the court, were well founded: unaccustomed to look beyond the limits of its own narrow circle, how could it form any idea of what was meant by liberty, or the will of the people? or conjecture that those terms had any other meaning than such as was synonimous with revolt or rebellion? A considerable part of the nobility and clergy appear, however, to have had larger acquaintance with mankind. They felt that the period of momentous changes was now arrived; and perhaps we may be allowed to suggest, that some personal motives might also operate on their minds, since they knew, that if the government should resume its wonted authority, they would themselves be the first victims of its wrath. But it would be derogating from the honor of a considerable number of individuals in these two orders, not to admit, that they were led to this surrender of their privileges by sentiments of

patriotism and justice. On the fourth of August, three weeks after the day from which dates the epocha of the revolution, the great sacrifice was consummated, by an unanimous vote for the suppression of all feudal rights. At this memorable sitting, the clergy and nobility acquiesced in the payment of all taxes whatever; the seignorial courts were abolished, and gratuitous justice enjoined to be distributed throughout the whole kingdom; and a general renunciation and suppression of the game laws was decreed. Amongst other renunciations, abolitions and surrenders, were those of *francs fiefs, main morte, cens,* feudal revenues of every kind, such as warrens, pigeon houses, the *droit d'annates* (first fruits) to the court of Rome, first fruits from vicars to bishops, vicar's dues, privileges of trades, called *jurandes* and *maitrise,* and the sales of places. No ecclesiastic was to enjoy more than one benefice. Citizens of every class were eligible to all places, civil and military, and the great nobility offered an homage to the nation of their titles of first barons, and likewise a part of their pensions. The last of those resolutions was that of bes-

towing on the king the title of restorer of French liberty, and the ordering *Te Deum* to be sung in the presence of the court.

One abolition yet remained to be made, and which did not pass with the same unanimity as the former. This was the abolition of tythes. Against this suppression, which was deemed by some sacrilegious, the clergy made considerable opposition. The votes of the assembly were at first so divided on this important topic, that no absolute decision could be pronounced; but as the example of renunciations and suppressions had been so splendid on the part of the nobility, the patriotism of the clergy gained the ascendancy over its private interest, and this tax on national industry shared the fate of other abuses. The archbishops of Paris and Rouen did the honors of the first surrender.

It was after singing *Te Deum* at the chapel of Versailles, and after expressions of joy and satisfaction in an answer to the address of the president of the national assembly, that the king writes this letter to the archbishop

of Arles. In this letter, as in his speech, the king is satisfied with the noble, generous, and sublime proceedings of the two first orders of the state, whom he represents as having made great sacrifices towards a general reconciliation, and to their country, and their king. These sacrifices for objects so important, and which he wears in his heart, meet, however, only with his admiration. The nobles may surrender their *cens*, their *capitaneries*, their *francs fiefs*, *main morte* and other feudal appendages; the clergy their dues, their first fruits, their simoniacal benefices, and their tythes: the king is too much penetrated with those acts of generosity and self-denial to permit such abdications of honor, profit, and power, to take place; he resolves to support the clergy in the ancient possession of their rights, acquired by the vows of the faithful, and the gifts of his forefathers; nor can he suffer the latter to be plundered of every thing which constituted its glory, and which are the rewards due to the civic and warlike virtues of the French nobility.

"I will never," says the king, "give my sanction to decrees by which they will be plundered. It is then that the French people may tax me with injustice or weakness. You, my lord archbishop, submit yourself to the decrees of Providence; I think I do the same, by not yielding to that enthusiam which has seized the different orders, but which glides only across my mind. I will do every thing that depends on me to preserve my clergy and nobility." There is an appearance of magnanimity and firmness in this declaration of the king, which ill accords with his general character of inconstancy and indecision. He had, indeed, already virtually sanctioned these decrees of the assembly in his answer to the president; he had accepted the title of restorer of French liberty, and joined in devout thanksgiving to heaven with his nobility and clergy, to implore the divine blessing on these splendid acts of generosity and patriotism. In this letter to the Archbishop of Arles, written but a few days after, he takes a tone hostile to every sentiment which he had led the assembly to believe he had entertained. He smiles at the enthu-

siasm of the orders against which he had had the firmness to steel his mind, and resolves to take a tenderer concern in their particular interests than they knew how to take themselves.

The motives which he alledges for this conduct, and which under any other circumstances would be highly patriotic and laudable, wear here a whimsical appearance. Why does the king resolve, contrary to the decrees of the assembly, contrary to the will of the privileged orders, to withhold his sanction to the decree; and to uphold those orders in their privileges, which they had abandoned? Because, he says, the French people might by his acquiescence accuse him of weakness or injustice. They must have been a very singular people indeed, who, after having groaned for ages under the oppression and exactions of the privileged orders, on finding themselves released, should become at once so enamoured of their chains, as to tax their deliverer with injustice. We might readily conceive, that had the people risen in insurrection against their oppressors,

and broken their fetters, the privileged orders might tax the king with injustice if he joined with the serfs, and protected them in this act of rebellion. We might even admit this accusation to be just on the part of the nobles, had the bare majority of the assembly, the *tiers-état* for instance, in direct opposition to the two other orders, passed this decree, and had the king assented; but when the vote of surrender was unanimous, when acclamations of joy and gratitude resounded from every corner of France, that the king should stand untouched amidst the general enthusiasm, that he should be the single defender of feudal privileges and ecclesiastical rights, abandoned by those most interested in their preservation, and that he should plead the will of the people for the perpetuity of those distinctions which the people were most interested in abolishing, appears to be a motive of action so extraordinary, that had not the true reason been announced in the close of the letter, we must have been utterly at a loss to account for his conduct.

"If superior force obliges me to grant my sanction," adds the the king, "I must yield;

but there will then remain in France neither monarchy nor monarch, things which can only exist where the clergy form a venerable and august order, and where the nobility enjoy a certain consideration, and can place themselves between the king and the people." If by the terms monarchy and monarch, the king understood what the words import, the will of one individual in the state to the exclusion of the rest; or if he meant the continuation of those abuses which fortified every privileged order against the rights and liberties of the nation in general, he was in the right. After the explosion which had taken place in July, and the surrender made of those abuses and privileges by the nobility and clergy, it was impossible that such a monarchy or monarch should exist. This then was the fatal error into which the king had fallen. He had been taught by those that surrounded him, that the revolution which had taken place was only a transient effervescence; that, clothed with supreme power as he had always been, and habituated to obey as were the people, he had only to resist the shock by temporising,

and

and every thing would return to its accustomed order. If he could not have prevailed with himself to bend, or rather elevate his mind to the rank in which the French nation had placed him, that of being the restorer of French liberty, and first magistrate of a free people, it would have been much more ingenuous and noble to have avowed his sentiments with frankness, and have terminated his career with the dignity becoming his character. On the contrary, we behold him making the fairest profession of attachment to the new order of things, whilst he was secretly resolved to overthrow it as soon as the occasion should offer; weak in every purpose where he should have full confidence, and strong and persevering in every determination, which could not fail to bring ruin on himself, and perpetuate the disorders and calamities of his country.

## LETTRE XXI.

*Au comte d'Artois.*

7 Septembre, 1789.

MON FRÈRE,

Vous vous plaignez, et votre lettre où le respect et l'amour fraternel guident votre plume, contient des reproches que vous croyez fondés. Vous parlez de courage, de résistance aux projets des factieux, de volonté, .... mon frère, vous n'êtes pas roi! Le ciel, en me plaçant sur le trône, m'a donné un cœur sensible, des sentimens d'un bon père. Tous les Français sont mes enfans; je suis le père commun de la grande famille confiée à mes soins. L'ingratitude, la haine arment contre moi; mais les yeux sont obscurcis, les esprits sont égarés, la tourmente révolutionnaire a troublé toutes les têtes.

Le peuple croit s'intéresser à sa propre cause, et c'est moi seul que j'aurois pu défendre. Je pourrois donner le signal du combat; mais quel combat horrible, et quelle victoire plus horrible encore! Pouvez-vous croire que j'eusse triomphé, au moment où tous les ordres de l'État se réunissoient, où tout ce peuple s'armoit contre moi, où toute l'armée oublioit ses sermens, l'honneur et son roi. J'aurois donné, il est vrai, le signal du carnage, et des milliers de Français auroient été immolés : . . . . . mais vous direz, peut-être, le peuple a triomphé; il vous a prouvé, par ses excès, que ses sentimens n'étoient pas si généreux, qu'il osoit abuser de la victoire et poignarder son ennemi vaincu. Ah! ne comptez-vous pour rien le calme d'une bonne conscience? J'ai fait mon devoir; et tandis que l'assassin est déchiré par les remords, je puis dire hautement; je ne suis pas responsable du sang versé; je n'ai point ordonné le meurtre; j'ai sauvé des français; j'ai sauvé ma famille, mes amis, tout mon peuple : j'ai la conscience intime d'avoir fait le bien; mes enne-

mis ont eu recours aux forfaits. Quel est celui d'entre nous dont le sort est le plus digne d'envie ? Cessez, mon frère, cessez de m'accuser : le temps, les circonstances, et mille causes, qu'il seroit trop long de détailler, ont fait les malheurs de la France. Il est trop cruel de me les reprocher; c'est se joindre alors à mes ennemis, et déchirer ce cœur paternel. Mon frère, je me suis sacrifié pour mon peuple; soyez persuadé que ce premier devoir rempli, je saurai me sacrifier pour vous et pour les Français qui vous ont suivi. Déjà votre éloignement excite des murmures; déjà les factions se promettent bien de nous accuser, et de tirer parti de cette démarche, qu'ils appellent, en ce moment, une fuite, une conspiration, un attentat. Ces idées se propagent; elles produiront de funestes résultats, si la tranquillité n'est point rétablie; si votre rappel devient impossible; si je néglige l'occasion favorable de rappeler en France les Français exilés volontairement, et qui doivent s'empresser d'obéir au vœu que je me ferai alors un devoir de manifester.

Adieu, mon frère, n'oubliez pas que je vous aime et que je m'occupe de vous.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER XXI.

*To the count d'Artois.*

Sept. 7th, 1789.

My Brother,

You complain, and your letter, in which respect and fraternal affection appear to guide the pen, contains reproaches which you think well founded. You talk of courage, of resistance to the projects of factious men, of sovereign will..... My brother, you are not a king! Heaven in placing me

on the throne, gave me a feeling heart, and the sentiments of a good father. All Frenchmen are my children, and I am the common father of the great family confided to my care. Hatred and ingratitude are armed against me, but their eyes are dimmed, their judgment is bewildered; the revolutionary torrent has dizzied every brain; the people believe they maintain the interests of their own cause, and I should be reduced to the necessity of defending myself alone. I might, indeed, give the signal of combat, but how horrible a combat, and how more horrible a victory! and can you believe I should have triumphed at the moment when all the orders of the state were united together, when all the people were armed against me, and when all the army forgot its oaths, its honor, and its king? I might no doubt have given the signal of carnage, and thousands of Frenchmen would have been immolated..... You will tell me, perhaps, that the people have triumphed, and have proved by their excesses, that their sentiments were not so generous; that

they have dared to abuse their victory, and stab their vanquished foe! — Alas! do you then apreciate as nothing the calm of a good conscience? I have done my duty; and while the assassin is the prey of remorse, I can declare loudly, that I am not responsible for the blood that is shed. I have not commanded murder; I have saved the lives of Frenchmen, I have saved my family, my friends, my whole people; I have an internal conviction of having acted well, while my enemies have had recourse to crimes: which of us is in a situation the most to be envied? Cease then, my brother, cease to accuse me; time, circumstances, and a thousand causes, too long for detail, have produced the misfortunes of France. It is too cruel to reproach me with these things; this were to join with my enemies, and break my paternal heart. I have sacrificed myself, brother, for my people, and this first duty being fulfilled, be persuaded that I shall know how to sacrifice myself for you, and the French who have followed you. Your absence already

excites murmurs; already the factious form the purpose of accusing us, and of taking advantage of this measure, which they call a flight, a conspiracy, a crime. These ideas are propagated, and will produce fatal effects, if tranquillity be not re-established, if your return should become impossible; if I should neglect the favorable opportunity of recalling the French, who are voluntary exiles, and who ought to obey with alacrity this desire, which I shall then feel it a duty to manifest. Adieu, my brother, do not forget that I love you, and am occupied by your concerns.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE TWENTY-FIRST LETTER.

If any circumstances may be alledged in extenuation of the error into which the king was led at this period, they are to be found

in the passions and prejudices of those who were continually goading him on to acts of hostility against the revolution. Amongst his greatest enemies were those of his own household. No one can read this letter without mingled sentiments of pity and indignation; pity for the unfortunate prince who had not courage to stem this torrent of perversity; and indignation against those who precipitated him by their counsels, or their reproaches, from one fault to another, till they had completed his ruin.

Amongst the persons who were the most strenuous for violent measures, the count d'Artois has been always signalised as the chief. A fugitive from France after the taking of the Bastille, and the retreat of the army which had been collected for the dispersion of the National Assembly, he talks proudly to his brother of courage and resistance, mingling reproaches with his complaints. The answer of the king to those reproaches is dignified, and we may judge from the reply, of the nature of the accusation. "I might have given," says the king, "the signal of carnage,

and thousands of Frenchmen would have been sacrificed." The count, in safety on the other side of the Rhine, was assured of victory had the combat taken place; but the king, who had calculated the chances more calmly, passes in review the enemies that were to be subdued. The enumeration was not despicable; it consisted of all the orders of the state, the whole of the people armed, the whole of the army forgetful of its oaths and withdrawn from its allegiance: no allies remained to the court, but the courtiers and counsellors who surrounded it, and of these the chiefs, on the first explosion, had sought their safety in flight.

Our interest for this unfortunate prince is still further excited, when we see with what a glow of self complacency he looks back on his refusal to give the signal for the commission of these horrors, which his brother had the project of seeing executed. The king replies to the reproaches for these sentiments of humanity, with meekness; "Forbear, my brother, forbear your accusations; the times, circumstances, and a thousand

other causes, too long to detail, have occasioned the misfortunes of France. It is too cruel to reproach me with them." Had the king possessed a less forbearing or benevolent heart, he might have answered the accusations brought against him, by detailing a few of those thousand causes which had produced this fancied desolation. Free here, at least, from reproach himself, he might have talked of the prodigality, the immoralities, and the extravagancies of those who had surrounded him, and might have sketched such portraits as would have made the writer of the letter he was answering shrink back from the resemblance. On the contrary, he remonstrates with his brother on his absence, and invites him to return; an invitation which, happily for his country, and probably for himself, was passed by unregarded.

The indisposition of the king against the changes which had taken place continues unabated. He talks of being pursued by ingratitude and hatred; he represents the whole of France as blinded, led astray, and tossed about by the revolutionary tempest;

and assures his brother, that he has sacrificed himself for his people. Of these sacrifices for the people it is difficult to discover the amount; if the king's own letters furnish any proof, we should be led to think the contrary. The king at this period was in the habit of being deceived and of deceiving himself; but there is one sacrifice which ought not to be forgotten, that of the vile and vindictive passions of those around him, who were eager to kindle the conflagration of civil war throughout the kingdom, which, though it would necessarily have ended in their own destruction, would at the same time have overwhelmed the country with general desolation.

# LETTRE XXII.

*A M. le comte d'Estaing.*

Versailles, 5 Oct. 1789, 7 h. du soir.

Vous voulez, mon cousin, que je me prononce dans les circonstances critiques où je me trouve, et que je prenne un parti violent, que j'emploie une légitime défense, ou que je m'éloigne de Versailles. Quelle que soit l'audace de mes ennemis, ils ne réussiront pas; le Français est incapable d'un régicide. C'est en vain qu'on verse l'or à pleines mains, que le crime et l'ambition s'agitent; j'ose croire que ce danger n'est pas aussi pressant que mes amis se le persuadent. La fuite me perdroit totalement, et la guerre civile en seroit le funeste résultat. Me défendre, il faudroit verser le sang des Français, mon cœur ne peut se familiariser avec cette affreuse idée. Agissons avec prudence; si je succombe, du moins je n'aurai

nul reproche à me faire. Je viens de voir quelques membres de l'Assemblée, je suis satisfait : j'ose attendre qu'il s'opérera une heureuse révolution dans les esprits. Dieu veuille, mon cousin, que la tranquillité publique soit rétablie. Mais point d'aggression, point de mouvement qui puisse laisser croire que je songe à me venger, même à me défendre.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER XXII.

*To the count d'Estaing.*

Versailles, October 5th, 1789.
Seven in the evening.

You wish, my cousin, that I should declare myself in the present critical circum-

stances, and have recourse to violent measures; that I should make use of just means of defence, or withdraw from Versailles. Whatever be the audacity of my enemies, they will not succeed; the French are incapable of regicide. It is in vain that heaps of gold are distributed, and that guilt and ambition are indefatigable in their attempts. I venture to believe that the danger is not so imminent as my friends imagine. [Flight would be my utter ruin, and civil war its calamitous consequence.]

Were I to defend myself, the blood of Frenchmen would be shed. Let us act with prudence, and I feel I shall at least be free from self-reproach. I have just seen some members of the assembly, and am satisfied; I dare flatter myself that a happy revolution will take place in men's minds. Heaven grant, my cousin, that public tranquility may be restored. But let there be no aggression, no commotion which can give the idea, that I think of avenging, or even of defending myself.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE TWENTY-SECOND LETTER.

This letter, addressed to the count d'Estaing, relates to the events of the fifth and sixth of October. The count was at that epocha commander in chief of the national militia of Versailles, and at the instant the letter was written headed, the body guards of the king, the regiment of Flanders, the dragoons, and the Swiss guards. Those corps were drawn up before the palace fronting the great avenue, waiting the approach of the national guard of Paris, who with M. de la Fayette at their head, were marching to Versailles.

The events of the first days of October form a very important era in the history of the revolution, have called forth the eloquence of orators and writers of various descriptions, have occupied the national councils

 and

and perplexed courts of justice. Notwithstanding the mystery in which those transactions were enveloped, there now appears little doubt that they were the result of a double conspiracy; of the court on the one hand, to regain the power it had lost, and of a party concealing its selfish designs under the mask of patriotism, pushing on the discontented to acts of violence, and making them the instruments of its criminal designs. Of this party the late Duke of Orleans has been more than suspected of being the chief; and whoever will take the trouble of looking into the circumstantial details of those events as recorded at the time, will find no difficulty in attributing to this inglorious demagogue the dishonorable motives which produced this event.

Of this conspiracy against his authority, clipped as it had been by the revolution, and even against his life, the king appears to have felt little apprehension. "Whatever be the audacity of my enemies," says he, "they will not succeed. The French are incapable of regicide. It is in vain that heaps

of gold are distributed, and that guilt and ambition are indefatigable in their attempts." Having this persuasion, it seems singular that the king should not have been more cautious in avoiding every pretext for the accomplishment of these criminal designs. Nothing surely was better fitted to give a color of justification to this new insurrection, than the scenes which were then passing in the palace of Versailles, where the hatred of the new order of things was so undissembled, that acts the most hostile and insulting to the nation were permitted publicly to take place, and were regarded by those whose interest it was to check those imprudent emotions, with more than approbation.

The delay of the king to sanction the decrees of the assembly forming the basis of the new constitution, and the real or fictitious scarcity of bread in the capital, were the pretexts for this attack on royal prerogative; of which attack, whatever was ill intended or malignant was parried by the prudence of the commander of Paris,

M. de la Fayette; who, compelled by the civil power to head the troops in this expedition, counteracted, or, at least, neutralised the sinister purposes of its original projectors. Both parties in this conspiracy failed in their design. The court felt once more how unavailing were all its efforts to bring about a counter-revolution, and the enemies of whom the king speaks, discovered that the instruments they had bribed or seduced into insurrection, were indocile to the perpetration of crimes to which it is probable they were instigated.

Whatever may have been the real state of the case, whether the conspiracy of the court against the revolution, or the conspiracy of the faction against the court, were the causes of this popular movement; the disposition and conduct of the king under these trying circumstances are worthy of the highest praise. If we blame him at times for his weakness, it is probable that we should blame him less if we knew all the wrong counsels which he resisted. The

count d'Estaing, it appears from the king's answer, had urged him to fight or fly. At the queen's trial, when the count was brought to witness against her, it was proved that he had procured from the municipality of Versailles, then in the interest of the court, an order on the fifth of October, to employ every means of conciliation with the Parisians, and in case of not succeeding, to repel force by force. The last article of these written instructions ordered him to neglect nothing in order to bring back the king to Versailles as soon as possible.

The queen had also been urged to secure herself by flight, as the person against whom the popular indignation was most excited. The deposition of the count on the queen's trial before the revolutionary tribunal deserves remembrance. "I heard," said he, "the counsellors of the court tell the prisoner (that is, the queen) that the people of Paris were coming to massacre her, and that she ought to depart; to which she replied with great dignity, — If the Parisians come here to assassinate me, it is at the

feet of my husband they shall find me, but I will never fly."

It is probable, that these arrangements with the municipality were taken by the count without the king's consent; since, when on the evening of the fifth of October the count presented them to the king, he received the refusal of compliance contained in this letter. The wisdom of the king is here finely contrasted with the folly of his advisers, who ought to have recollected the events which had passed only three months before, and to have felt how unavailing would have been the resistance of a few companies of soldiers against an armed nation, and how little confidence could be reposed in the fidelity of troops, who had already broken their oaths according to the king's accusation, and who on the present occasion were disposed to a similar relaxation. The king felt too much the danger of his position to act up to the courage or rashness of his defenders. The answer, therefore, which he returned to the decrees of the municipality and the instances of

the count, is marked with traits of humanity which do no less honor to his heart, than the resolution he had taken of abiding the consequences at Versailles, do credit to his judgment. It has been already mentioned, that previous to the arrival of the Parisians at Versailles, the king, while he accepted certain decrees of the assembly, had refused or deferred his sanction to such as formed the basis of that liberty, of which he had been proclaimed the restorer. This refusal, for so the delay was construed by the assembly, had excited the warmest animadversions; and after a long discussion, in which it was represented, that the assembly ought not one instant to defer requiring of the king a pure and simple acceptance of the declaration of the rights of man, as well as of the constitutional articles already decreed; and the president, accompanied by a deputation, was ordered to present himself before the king, and to beseech him to give his sanction to these decrees.

It was at the end of this discussion that the Parisians appeared at the bar of the

assembly. Whatever change may have been produced in the dispositions of the king by the remonstrances and firmness of the assembly, the terror excited by the insurrection was no doubt an additional motive to lead him to give his sanction to those immortal principles, which formed the basis of French liberty; he also consented at the same time to change his residence from Versailles to Paris, where the enemies of the revolution being more nearly observed, would have fewer opportunities, and less means of combining against its cause. Meanwhile the representatives of the nation, thus relieved from a part of their inquietudes, had leisure to give form and substance to the great principles of freedom, and embody them, as it were, into maxims of national faith.

## LETTRE XXIII.

*Louis à M. de Brissac.*

Du 28 Oct., 1789.

JUSTE appréciateur, monsieur, du zèle chevaleresque qui a dirigé toute votre conduite depuis l'époque de nos malheurs, je trouve une satisfaction infinie à vous témoigner personnellement les sentimens de gratitude que la reine et moi vous devons, pour ce que votre loyauté vous a dicté dans la journée d'hier. J'ai appris, à mon réveil ce matin, que vous étiez malade; j'ai cru ne pouvoir mieux vous prouver le vif intérêt que nous prenons à votre personne, qu'en vous assurant de l'immuable estime que j'aurai toute ma vie pour un aussi brave Français, et un sujet aussi fidèle que vous.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER XXIII.

*Lewis to M. de Brissac.*

October 28th, 1789.

JUSTLY appreciating, Sir, the romantic zeal which has directed all your conduct since the epocha of my misfortune, I feel an infinite satisfaction in testifying personally the sentiments of gratitude, which the queen and myself owe to you for all that your loyalty dictated during the events of yesterday. When I rose this morning, I was informed that you were ill, and I thought I could not better prove the lively interest we take in you, than by assuring you of the unalterable esteem, which I shall feel all my life for so good a Frenchman, and so faithful a subject.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE TWENTY-THIRD LETTER.

M. de Brissac, whose chevaleresque zeal is here so much the theme of eulogium, was among the most active in prompting the king to resistance against the revolution, by the proposal of measures the most extravagant, and the least likely to be crowned with success. He was the commander in chief of the king's new guards, and by the imprudent exercise which he made of this ardor in the royal cause, was the principal personage who contributed afterwards to their suppression. His zeal was so much the more fatal to the king, as the resistance to which he prompted him against the decrees of the assembly with respect to this guard, was not amongst the least of the causes which brought on the events of the tenth of August.

## LETTRE XXIV.

*A M. de Baument, mon agent à Londres.*

Paris, ce 29 Novembre, 1789.

Votre dernière lettre ne termine rien, et parle peu de l'opération dont vous êtes chargé. Quelle insouciance, ou quelle inertie ! Vous savez que j'ai besoin de la somme que vous êtes chargé de négocier, et vous vous laissez prévenir. Vous ne voyez point les banquiers accepteurs, et vous laissez tranquillement s'effectuer l'emprunt du duc d'Orléans. Cependant, les momens étoient si précieux, et l'argent si nécessaire ! Je sais bien que le ministre de l'intérieur, avec sa contre-police, ne fait pas grand chose, et me coûte beaucoup. Il connoît toute ma répugnance à m'endetter, et combien peu je prise les moyens de séduction. Il veut singer le duc d'Orléans, qui se ruine pour faire le mal, et se venger de quelque plate

chanson, ou de quelque mépris, dont en mon particulier, je sais qu'il s'est bien rendu digne. Un de mes agens au Palais-Royal, m'a fait connoître non-seulement la destination des sommes qu'il a empruntées, mais encore l'emploi de ces sommes : il est certain que l'escompte prélevé, et le *boni* des entremetteurs, soustraits, il a été distribué 15 cent mille livres aux principaux partisans du duc d'Orléans. Mirabeau a eu, pour sa part, 80 mille livres qui ont été comptées chez Latouche, et portées dans trois fiacres, rue Chaussée d'Antin*. J'ai la liste de ceux des députés qui ont reçu. On a distribué 60 mille liv. dans le faubourg St.-Antoine, et chez quelques partisans du duc; on s'est empressé de faire payer l'arriéré à quelques gens audacieux, et connus par leur esprit d'intrigue et leurs vues ambitieuses. On a porté, sur cette liste, le nom d'un certain Marat, celui de Danton, les noms de

* A cette copie étoit attachée, avec une épingle, une liste contenant les noms de ceux qui avoient reçu des sommes provenant de l'emprunt, fait par le duc d'Orléans, à Londres, en 1789.

quelques Génevois réfugiés en France, de ce parti qui, à Genève, se disoit patriote; enfin, de quelques hommes obscurs, mais très-dangereux.

Voilà bien des méchans réunis contre moi, je le sens bien; il faut, comme vous le dites, user de leur tactique, et m'attacher des hommes entreprenans, ou plutôt récompenser le zèle de quelques-uns de mes fidèles sujets. C'est avec plaisir que je ferai distribuer l'argent que j'ai promis : il ne sera point employé pour commettre le crime; mais il servira à surveiller mes ennemis, et à déjouer leurs projets. Hâtez-vous d'exécuter mes ordres, et que l'emploi soit rempli. Profitez de la bonne intention dehors.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER XXIV.

*To M. de Baument, agent at London.*

Paris, Nov. 29th, 1789.

Your last latter terminates nothing, and speaks little of the operation with which you are charged. What indifference, or what apathy! You know I stand in need of the sum which you were directed to negociate, and you suffer it to be obtained by others. You have not seen the bankers, and you allow the loan of the duke of Orleans to be quietly effected, although the moments were so precious, and money so necessary. I know well that the minister of the interior, with his counter-police, atchieves but little, and costs me a great deal; he knows all my repugnance to incurring debt, and how small a value I place

on the means of seduction. He wishes to ape the duke of Orleans, who ruins himself to do harm, and avenges himself for some silly songs, or some marks of contempt, which in my opinion he well deserved.

One of my agents of the Palais Royal has made known to me not only the destination of the sums he had borrowed, but the actual employment of those sums; and it is certain that, the discount deducted together with the profits of brokers, fifteen hundred thousand livres have been distributed among the principal partisans of the duke of Orleans. Mirabeau has had eighty thousand livres for his share, which were counted down at Latouches, and carried in three hackney coaches to the rue Chaussée d'Antin.* I have the list of deputies who have received money. Sixty thousand livres were distributed in the faubourg St. An-

* A paper was fastened with a pin to this letter, containing the lists of the names of those who had received sums arising from the loan made by the duke of Orleans, at London, in 1789.

toine, and to some partisans of the duke. They have been eager to pay off the arrears to some daring men, known by their intriguing spirit, and their ambitious views. The name of a certain Marat is inscribed on the list, that also of Danton, and of some Genevan refugees in France, of that party which calls itself patriotic; upon the whole those of some obscure but very dangerous individuals.

Thus a number of wicked persons are united against me; I am persuaded that I must, as you tell me, employ their tactics, and attach some enterprising men to my interests, or rather recompense the zeal of my faithful subjects.

I shall distribute with pleasure the money I have promised, which shall be employed not for the commission of crimes, but serve to watch over my enemies, and counteract their projects. Hasten to execute my orders, fill up the loan, and avail yourself of the good dispositions abroad.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE TWENTY-FOURTH LETTER.

This letter furnishes a melancholy proof of the false measures into which the king was sometimes betrayed. We see him here descending to the employment of those disavowed and undignified means, which he condemns with so much justice in the duke of Orleans. We see him countenancing his minister for home affairs in the use of a counter-police, which effects but little and costs much; and while he blames this minister for aping the duke of Orleans, he accuses his agents in London of negligence or inactivity, in not furnishing him with the means of following the example he condemns. This M. de Baument, it appears, was also one of the counsellors, as well as money-brokers, of this unfortunate prince. "I must, as you say," quoting this counsellor, "make use of their tactics (the tactics of his ene-

mies), and attach enterprising men to my service." The king, indeed, declares, that this money should not be employed for the purposes of crime, and it is certain that he was himself incapable of thus misapplying it; but what assurance had he that these *enterprising* men would be the faithful mandataries of his benevolent purposes? and had he no misgivings that their undertakings, aided by the supplies expected from London, would lead him on to some other crisis of the revolution, from which he might find more difficulty in escaping than the former?

This system of corruption, however well it might apply to the disposition and views of the duke of Orleans, was surely very unworthy of Lewis the sixteenth. It had also this evil tendency; that while the king thus deluded himself with the persuasion that he could watch his enemies and disconcert their projects, he indulged a blameable spirit of resistance against the national assembly. Had he, on the contrary, sincerely and frankly co-operated in the views of the prudent majority who had at this period the ascen-

dancy, he would have done more towards watching his enemies, and disconcerting their projects, than could have been atchieved with all the money which loans and bankers could procure.

As an encouragement to exertion and activity, the king informs M. de Baument, not only that the duke of Orleans had succeeded in borrowing fifteen hundred thousand livres in London, which was doubtful, but also in what manner it had been distributed. Mirabeau, according to this account, received eighty thousand livres, which was conveyed to him in three hackney coaches. Against this Lacedemonian mode of transfer there is nothing to object but its improbability: Mirabeau might, indeed, have received sums from the duke of Orleans; he is accused also of having received sums from Lewis the sixteenth. With respect to Mirabeau, therefore, the king and his cousin were on equal terms. But Mirabeau, it seems, was not the only beneficiary of the duke of Orleans's bounty. The king assures his agent that he has a list of

the members of the assembly who partook of this same loan.

This list is annexed to the letter, and though it was the intention of the French editor, on delivering this correspondence, that it should be published to the world, yet I think myself justified in imitating the prudence of the king on this occasion, who mentions to his correspondent the names only of two persons, whom it were impossible from their flagitiousness to calumniate; unwilling, probably, in circumstances where he might be deceived, to injure the reputation of innocent men. To this decision I am the more inclined, as the king, in transcribing their names, does not pretend to have any positive assurances of the corruption which is charged upon them. The report of this delinquency is made him by a spy. "One of my agents at the Palais Royal has informed me, not only of the destination of the sums which he (the duke of Orleans) has borrowed, but also of the manner in which they have been employed." The king, as well as his

minister, had his counter-police, and, like a sagacious general, kept his soldiers in the enemy's camp. It was the duty of those spies to gain information of the motions of the duke of Orleans; and as those who are employed in such occupations are usually persons who possess no very nice feelings with respect to honor, and who have sworn no inviolable attachment to truth, it is probable that the information transmitted was often that which was most favorable, instead of that which was most exact. The agent was interested in communicating such details as should enhance the value of his services, fearless of contradiction; since the truth or falshood of what he stated, could not by its nature run the risk of investigation.

But the most direct and formal refutation of the falshood which this spy imposed on his employer, would be the publication of the names contained in the list. There are, indeed, some whom it would be no breach of candor to suspect of earning and receiving those wages of iniquity, and against whom it had been well for their country, if no crimes of

greater magnitude could have been charged; crimes from the mention of which we start back with horror: names also of doubtful reputation are here inscribed. But recorded on this list we find persons whose purity of conduct even the voice of slander never dared to impeach; men whose principles, firm amidst the tremendous shocks of the revolution, have braved corruption as well as tyranny of every kind, and under every form, and some of whom sealed their testimony to the cause of liberty with their blood. All, therefore, that this letter proves, is, that the king employed agents to procure money in order to reward "enterprising men;" that his minister of foreign affairs had a police in opposition to that of the avowed public authority; and that he himself employed spies in the palace of the duke of Orleans. Thus was Lewis the sixteenth led on by artful and designing persons to the imitation of a conduct which his sense of honor as a man, and his sentiment of dignity as a prince, forced him to mark in another not only with disapprobation, but to stigmatise with abhorrence.

# LETTRE XXV.

*A son altesse éminentissime Emanuel de Rohan-Polduc, grand-maître de l'ordre de Malte.*

Paris, le 18 Novembre, 1789.

MON COUSIN,

Dans des siècles pieux, la France généreuse avoit comblé, de ses bienfaits, l'ordre de St.-Jean de Jérusalem. Le monde chrétien en reconnut l'utilité; il lui plut encore d'accorder, à vos chevaliers, tous les priviléges dont ils ont conservé les prérogatives jusqu'à présent. Les rois, mes aïeux, sanctionnèrent la volonté des fondateurs et le droit des titulaires. Des circonstances impérieuses ont amené un changement dans l'ordre politique de la France; les chevaliers de la langue française imiteront sans doute l'exemple que je leur donne. Ce n'est pas

lorsque tous les ordres de l'Etat font des sacrifices, qu'ils resteront en arrière : je laisse à votre sagesse, mon cousin, de prendre les mesures qui peuvent coïncider avec les travaux de l'Assemblée nationale. Sur ce, je prie Dieu, mon cousin, qu'il vous ait en sa sainte garde.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER XXV.

*To his most eminent highness Emanuel de Rohan-Polduc, grand-master of the Order of Malta.*

Paris, Nov. 18th, 1789.

My Cousin,

In pious ages the generosity of France heaped benefits on the order of St. John of

Jerusalem, while the christian world felt the utility of this order, and was pleased to grant also to your knights the privileges of which they preserve the prerogatives to this day. The kings my ancestors sanctioned the will of the founders, and the rights of the titularies. Imperious circumstances have produced a change in the political state of France, and the knights of the French tongue will no doubt imitate the example which I have given them. Whilst every order of the state are making sacrifices, they will not stand aloof. To your wisdom, my cousin, I leave the choice of such measures as shall coincide with the labors of the National Assembly; and so I pray God, my cousin, to take you under his holy protection.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE TWENTY-FIFTH LETTER.

In the revolutionary revision of privileges which took place at this period, the monastical-military order of Malta had not escaped the searching eye of the assembly. The property belonging to this order was comprehended in the decree, which declared all ecclesiastical property to be national, and the knights of St. John who belonged to the French tongue became the pensioners of the state.

Although this order had not the honor and the consolation of making the surrenders of their privileges like the great orders of the state in France, yet there were some amongst them who had dispositions equally generous and patriotic. In a memorial which had been compiled at Malta about this period, by the chevalier de Ransijat, who held at the

time one of the highest offices in the island, he observes, that " the abuses which had crept into the order were so numerous and so striking, that every member which composed it appeared alike to feel the necessity of reforming them." On questioning the chevalier respecting those feelings among his brother knights, it appeared, that such sentiments were pretty much confined to himself. That part of his memorial which treats of the slavery of the Maltese and the means of remedy, do him honor both as a man and a citizen.

The king's letter to the grand-master is written in a style not only of urbanity but of affection. The king brings before his recollection the shades of past ages, which he decorates with the epithet of pious, and which the innovators of the present day accustom themselves to stigmatise with the opprobrious denominations of dark and superstitious. He consoles his cousin with the remembrance of the former obligations of the christian world to his order, which the christian world at present has the ingrati-

tude to disavow. The devotedness of the royal ancestry of France to the knights of Malta is likewise introduced, which renders more melancholy the contrast of the next sentence of the letter, informing the duke that imperious circumstances had necessitated a change in the political order of France.

In the letter which the king wrote to the archbishop of Arles after the decrees of the fourth of August, recapitulating the services rendered by the great orders of the state, and the honors and rewards bestowed on them, he declares his firm resolution to maintain them in the enjoyment of their privileges, in spite of the renunciation which they themselves had made. As this generosity on the part of the king met at the time with no encouragement from those who were most interested in exciting it, he prudently forbears from making similar declarations to the order of Malta. He pleads on the contrary his own example, and that of the great orders of the state, holding up the sacrifices made in France as objects of imitation. The Knights were compelled to yield to superior orders,

and to comply with the decrees of the assembly. But neither the sacrifices made by the king, the nobility, or the clergy, had much influence on their minds. They remained true to their allegiance amidst the general defection; and could the expression of their sentiments have reached the throne, their answer to this missive would have been the parody of the king's letter to the Archbishop of Arles, containing the offer of preserving him in the enjoyment of monarchical prerogatives, in spite of himself.

## LETTRE XXVI.

*A M. de Mirabeau.*

8 Janvier, 1790.

J'ai trop de plaisir, monsieur, à croire aux sentimens que vous m'assurez avoir pour ma personne et pour ma famille, pour ne pas déférer à la demande que vous me faites d'un entretien particulier. M. de la Porte a reçu l'ordre de vous introduire aujourd'hui sur les neuf heures du soir; je souhaite vivement, monsieur, que vous éprouviez autant de facilité à réparer le mal qui est fait, que je serai empressé de seconder, de tout mon pouvoir, les moyens qui peuvent tendre à ce but.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER XXVI.

*To M. de Mirabeau.*

January 8th, 1790.

I HAVE too much pleasure, Sir, in believing the sentiments which you assure me you feel for my person and family, not to acquiesce in your desire of a private interview. M. de Laporte has orders to introduce you this evening at nine o'clock. I wish most ardently, Sir, that you may find as much facility in repairing the mischief which is done, as I shall be eager to second with all my power the means which may lead to that end.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE TWENTY-SIXTH LETTER.

This letter is the answer to an application made by Mirabeau for a private conference with the king. Mirabeau was too important a character in the revolution not to feel that his offers of protection were entitled to the respect of every party; and it appears, that his first approaches of amity were received by the king with very sensible satisfaction. Lewis the sixteenth expresses an earnest wish, that remedy for the mischief already done might be found as easy to be effected by his new ally, as he himself should be anxious to second the means with the whole force of his own authority.

This answer sufficiently explains that Mirabeau, in his letter, had made professions of zeal and attachment to the king, but of what nature was the mischief complained of,

 or

or what the remedy he had found, it leaves us wholly ignorant. The habitual laxity of this statesman's moral character might lead to suspicions, that his political principles were not unassailable, and such persons as are more prompt in calculating the probabilities of evil than of good, will perhaps conjecture that motives less pure than those of public virtue influenced Mirabeau in his determinations.

But whatever cause he may have given for such suspicions towards the close of his political career, there is no evidence that Mirabeau at this period was engaged in any dishonorable treaty with the court. Some object of great interest, however, must have led him to demand this interview, and the king's answer clearly intimates that it was an affair of public concern. We must have left Mirabeau under the suspicions which such an interview is likely to create, had I not been favored with the following anecdote by a person whom Mirabeau consulted on this occasion, and in whose information and fidelity I have the most unbounded reliance.

" Few persons are acquainted with the great project which occupied Mirabeau at the period when he obtained this interview with the king. He was desirous of prevailing on him to leave Paris, and to repair first to Rouen, and afterwards to Havre, if circumstances should require it. He had fixed on those towns as the most conveniently situated, both for supplies, and also for an easier escape if events should turn out unfortunately. He had secured the march towards Rouen of the different regiments of cavalry and infantry which were then in garrison from Dunkirk to Dieppe and Amiens; and who, by taking speedy possession of Gallion and Vernueil, might prevent the attempts which La Fayette, at the head of the national guard of Paris, would not fail to make, to hinder this flight, or render it ineffectual."

" When the king should have made good his retreat from Paris, he was to have published a manifesto, in which, after having enumerated the abuses which were to be corrected, and assured the people of his firm resolution to sacrifice every thing to this

object, he was to have required the attendance of the whole of the national assembly, and of such other Frenchmen whom he should have thought worthy, by their patriotism, their love of real liberty, their information and their courage, of aiding him with their counsels in the formation of a constitution. This constitution, it was hoped, would effect the reform of abuses, confer on the people the enjoyment of the exercise of their rights, and fix the due boundaries of the legislative and executive powers. This plan, which would necessarily have produced the most happy changes, was opposed by the queen, the courtiers, and other individuals, who fancied that they saw in its execution the certain destruction of their own intrigues and influence."

Had we not seen the most singular projects carried into effect during the revolution, we should have been surprised at the boldness of that which Mirabeau now suggested to the king. Nor is it easy to conjecture on what grounds he could have hoped for the compliance of Lewis the sixteenth; since,

on the supposition that the king was favorable to the revolution, of which he had hitherto given no unequivocal proofs, it is scarcely to be imagined that he would have confided himself to the direction of a person, who had been most open in personal defiance of his authority, and whom he deemed the stipendiary of his most determined foes. This last circumstance, indeed, might not have been known to Mirabeau; but it accounts sufficiently for the king's refusal, even without the interference of the queen and other individuals, anxious for the preservation of their privileges and influence.

Of the plan itself it were difficult to judge, without knowing more of its details; but on the first aspect it presents all the evils of civil discord: since, admitting that the assembly were obedient to the voice of the king, the Parisians would surely have been dissatisfied with a measure so detrimental to their personal interests; nor does it clearly appear what new impulsion of patriotism the king would have received from his residence at Rouen, which he might not have felt from his abode at Paris.

# LETTRE XXVII.

*A M. de Malesherbes.*

16 Février, 1790.

J'AI besoin, mon cher Malesherbes, de m'entourer de vos lumières, pour déterminer la sanction de plusieurs décrets qui sont du ressort de vos profondes connoissances en législation; je compte assez sur la fidélité de votre attachement, pour espérer que vous fixerez la résolution que je dois prendre à cet égard.

Depuis long-temps, mon cher Malesherbes, vous avez été témoin des intentions pures que je n'ai cessé de manifester pour le bonheur des Français; c'est encore vous à qui je m'adresse pour persévérer dans les mêmes principes.

Adieu, mon cher Malesherbes, vous connoissez toute la sincérité de mes sentimens pour vous.

LOUIS.

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER XXVII.

*To M. de Malesherbes.*

Feb. 16th, 1790.

I STAND in need, my dear Malesherbes, of being enlightened by you, in order to determine on the sanction of several decrees, of which your profound knowledge in legislation renders you so adequate a judge. I have sufficient reliance on the fidelity of your attachment, to hope that

you will fix the resolution I ought to take in these matters.

You, my dear Malesherbes, have been long the witness of the purity of intention, which I have never ceased to manifest for the happiness of the French. To you I again address myself to fortify me in the same principles. Adieu, my dear Malesherbes, you know all the sincerity of my sentiments for you.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE TWENTY-SEVENTH LETTER.

However great may have been the habitual weakness and irresolution of the king, sufficient evidences of which appear in the course of this correspondence, it must be admitted that his life hitherto had been a

continued struggle against this fatal propensity. Malesherbes appears to have been the rock against which he leaned in times of perplexity or danger; the asylum to which he fled from the turbulence of faction, the tumult of party, and where he might fix his wavering resolutions in security and repose. Of the motives which prompted the counsels of other men, he might be pardoned for being suspicious: a thousand discordant interests, he knew, swayed the determinations of those who surrounded him; nor can we ever hope to do justice to the personal good intentions of this prince, while we remain ignorant of all the evil suggestions which he struggled to resist.

The king at the time of writing this letter was in the zenith of his popularity. Not only the metropolis but the whole of France was at that moment in the delirium of joy. The decree of the national assembly, which gave Lewis the sixteenth the honorable title of restorer of French liberty, was confirmed by acclamation throughout the whole nation. The heart of every friend to the well being

of his country, dilated at the prospect of happiness which opened before his view; this was the golden age of the revolution, and when mention is made of its most glorious epocha, it is on these days of promise that the mind reposes with pure and unembittered delight.

When the enemies of the late changes found that the attempt was fruitless to excite any section of the people against measures which the people were most interested in supporting; when they saw that the higher orders of the state were resolved to consummate the sacrifices they had begun, and that, instead of returning back on the abuses which had been reformed, the disposition to make further researches was not dissembled; they were compelled to retreat, and intrench themselves behind the royal authority, which was now the only rampart they could hope to maintain against the overwhelming progress of the revolution.

The protection afforded to those discordant spirits, and sometimes too favorable a

leaning towards their counter-revolutionary designs, had contributed to bring on the great crisis of the fourteenth of July, and the events of the sixth of October, which menaced the existence of the royal authority itself. The king, perceiving the danger of yielding further support to such dangerous inmates, and finding that the countenance which he gave, or the silence which he observed, were construed by the nation into a full approbation of their projects, or rather into a co-operation in their measures, wisely resolved to come to a fair and open explanation with the country, to dissipate the apprehensions and misgivings of one party, and crush the sinister expectations and lurking hopes of the other.

With this view, the king, accompanied by M. Necker, repaired to the Hall of the national assembly on the fourth of February.

The speech which he made on this occasion forms a remarkable epocha in the history of the revolution, and has been

always alledged as an incontestable proof of the sincerity of his attachment to the changes which had taken place.

"I confess," says the king, after a few slight observations on the disorders which had prevailed, and which remained yet without remedy, "that I had hoped to have led you by an easier and more tranquil route to the end which you proposed at the time I formed the plan of assembling and uniting you together; but my happiness and my glory are not the less intimately connected with the success of your labors; and by an active vigilance on my part, I have preserved them from that fatal influence to which they might have been subject from the unhappy circumstances in which you were placed." After stating a few of those circumstances, the king continues; "I think that the time is now come, when it is necessary for the interest of the state that I should associate myself, in a more open and decided manner, to the execution and success of all that you have done for the advantage of France. I cannot seize a more convenient

opportunity than that in which you present to me for my acceptance, decrees destined to establish in the kingdom a new organisation, and which must necessarily have so important an effect on the happiness of my subjects, and the prosperity of this empire.

After recapitulating the various advantages of this new organisation, the division of the kingdom into departments, which M. Burke calls belonging to Chequer, No. 71, and "on which," according to the king, "depended the salvation of France;" he adds, "time will reform what may remain defective in the collection of laws which have been the work of this assembly; but every enterprise which may tend to shake the principles of the constitution, to overthrow or weaken its happy influence, would tend only to introduce among us the dreadful evils of discord. Let it then be every where known, that the king and the representatives of the nation are united in the same interest and the same desire, in order that this opinion and this firm belief may spread throughout

the provinces the spirit of peace and of goodwill."

After enumerating the advantages which the revolution had yet left to the nobility and clergy, and the losses they had sustained; after expressing his belief that the whole body of Frenchmen, without distinction, would one day acknowledge the benefit of the entire suppression of the different orders of the state, the king added these words: "I also should have many losses to enumerate, if amidst the great interests of the state I paused at personal calculations; but I find a sufficient compensation, a compensation the most ample, in the increase of the happiness of the nation, and it is in the fullness of my heart that I express this sentiment.

"I will defend then, I will maintain constitutional liberty, the principles of which have been consecrated by the general voice as well as by my own. I will do more, and in concert with the queen, who shares in all my sentiments, I will begin early to

prepare the mind and heart of my son for the new order of things, which circumstances have introduced. I will habituate him from his tender childhood to be happy in the happiness of the French, and to acknowledge always, in spite of the language of flatterers, that a wise constitution will preserve him from the dangers of inexperience, and that national liberty adds a new value to the sentiments of love and fidelity, of which the nation, for so many ages past, has given its king such convincing evidence."

It was in this disposition of mind, becoming the chief magistrate of a free and powerful nation, that the king addresses this letter to M. de Malesherbes. Certain writers in the revolution, who claim the attention of a certain class of readers, less from the fidelity of their narrations, or the brilliancy of their elocution, than the intemperance of their zeal for what they call the memory of the monarch, have attempted to prove that this was a royal stratagem, of which the exercise was legitimated by

the perilous situation in which the king was placed. Of the estimation in which these advocates of royal integrity, some of whom call themselves statesmen and ministers, ought to be held, we may form a judgment from the display of the king's real sentiments, not indeed in his public discourses, which are points in contest, but in his private letters, where dissimulation would have been absurdity. "For a long time, my dear Malesherbes," says the king in this letter, "you have been a witness of the pure intentions I have never ceased to manifest for the happiness of the French: to you I still address myself to fortify me in the same principles." It surely is much more honorable to the king to believe that he was sincere when he thus unbosomed himself to friendship, than to pretend, with his panegyrists, that he always meant the contrary of what he so well expressed.

## LETTRE XXVIII.

*A M. Duval Dépresmenil.*

27 Mars, 1790.

Je suis d'autant plus disposé à croire, monsieur, à la sincérité du repentir que vous me témoignez, qu'avant de me l'exprimer, vous avez fait preuve, dans le sein de la représentation nationale, d'un zèle pour le maintien de la monarchie, qui n'a point échappé à ma sensibilité, ni à celle de toute ma famille.

Lorsqu'on est aussi susceptible de réparer ses erreurs, monsieur, on doit avoir les plus justes droits à une estime particulière; je me plais à vous en donner l'assurance, et reste avec le désir de trouver l'occasion de vous le prouver.

LOUIS.

†

(TRANSLATION.)

## LETTER XXVIII.

*To M. Duval d'Éspremenil.*

March 27th, 1790.

I AM so much the more disposed, Sir, to believe the sincerity of the repentance you testify, that, before you expressed it to me, you gave proofs in the National Representation of a zeal for the support of the monarchy, which has not escaped my sensibility, nor that of my whole family.

He who is so susceptible of repairing his errors, has the highest claim to particular esteem. I offer you this assurance with pleasure, and wish I may find an occasion of giving you the proof.

LEWIS.

## *OBSERVATIONS*

### ON THE TWENTY-EIGHTH LETTER.

Among the most bold and ardent opposers of the measures of the government previous to the revolution, the name of M. d'Espremenil, member of the parliament of Paris, holds a very distinguished place. The parliament had been exiled to Troyes for refusing to enregister two edicts, the land and stamp tax, which the first assembly of the notables had rejected under the administration of Calonne, and which the parliament was still less inclined to sanction under that of his successor, the Archbishop of Toulouse.

The only dyke against ministerial despotism in France had been the parliaments; slender, indeed, to arrest the overwhelming torrent, but still presenting a point of resistance. In proportion as the people had grown more enlightened, the parliaments had grown more bold; but as it often hap-

pens in measures of opposition, these judiciary corporations had sometimes outstepped their prerogatives, and discovered tendencies towards an usurpation of the privileges of the executive power. The instruction which had been generally spread throughout France during the reign of Lewis the sixteenth, had led the nation, especially after the first meeting of the notables, to look with disapprobation on usurpations of every kind; and the measure of resistance which heretofore had been applauded in the parliament, was now treated with less respect. This change in public opinion did not escape the observation of the parliament, while employed in combating the royal and ministerial injunction for the enregistering of the two edicts in question. They perceived, that by extending their pretensions as formerly, they would now weaken their influence, and that their surest mode of defence was to intrench themselves behind their acknowledged rights. M. d'Espremenil was the member who suggested this counsel. He represented to them, that it was useless to defend any longer their former pretensions;

that the reality of their incompetence was understood and felt; and that the only escape from the embarrassment in which they were placed was to make a merit of this avowal. The parliament followed his counsels, and declared that they had not the right of sanctioning these taxes, but that this right belonged to the states general alone, of which they also required the speedy convocation. The ministers were greatly disconcerted, both at the extraordinary avowal of the parliament, and still more at the dangerous requisition it had made. This demand was so highly relished, and repeated with so much enthusiasm, that the king was compelled to comply, and engaged himself to do so by a solemn promise. The parliament, therefore, rendered a real service to the state, and the glory of first invoking this measure belonged to M. d'Espremenil. It must be admitted, however, that these services were not altogether dictated by the purest patriotism; personal interest, and that of the body which they defended by this measure, happened in the present case to be connected with that of the nation, little solicitous to scrutinise

the motives of a conduct from which it expected to reap such mighty advantages.

The exile of the parliament followed this declaration of incompetence, and its return was the recompense of some act of submission, which was regarded by the public as cowardice and contradiction. The ministry deeming this circumstance favorable, determined on establishing a plenary court, by the authority of which it might disembarrass itself of the parliament as the enregisterer of taxes; while the keeper of the seals, to punish this pertinacity, occupied himself in creating in each generality baillages, to which were given the power of civil and criminal courts of justice. Against this innovation every parliamentary buckler was raised, and every member sworn to resistance. A new attempt was made, by the holding a royal sitting, to induce the parliament to enregister the taxes, but the opposition became still more violent, and some who were the most strenuous in their resistance, among whom was the duke of Orleans, were again banished.

The ministry, defeated in their projects, had recourse to despotic measures, which completed their disgrace and humiliation. The peers and magistrates who had composed the royal sitting, continued in their assemblies to oppose the establishment of the new courts of justice. It was on this occasion that M. d'Espremenil, by the force of his eloquence, and the energy of his declarations, led the peers and parliament to take the oath of union, of which he dictated the form. This open defiance of ministerial authority was considered as an act of rebellion, which it was impossible to leave unpunished. Accordingly the Palace of Justice was invested by military force, and M. d'Espremenil, with another of his colleagues, after some ineffectual delay, that of awaiting the king's signature to the warrant, which had only been signed by the minister, was carried off prisoner of state. The parliament were avenged by the dismission of the minister, who retired loaded with public execration and contempt. M. Necker was recalled, the states general were

assembled, and M. d'Espremenil became a member of the constituent assembly.

In this assembly M. d'Espremenil ranged himself in the party of the *côté droit*, and near the period of writing the letter, to which this of the king's is the answer, had signalized himself by the support which he gave to propositions in favor of the court. He was a defender of monastic establishments, which were at this epocha abolished; and when the discussion took place respecting the power of suppressing riots or partial insurrections, he warmly supported a proposition by M. Cazales of investing the king with absolute authority for three months, and suspending during that time the responsability of the executive power. These acts of devotedness to the court, and others of an extravagant kind which subjected him to the formal censure of the assembly, had not escaped the attention of the king, and M. d'Espremenil had been too formidable an adversary not to be welcomed as an ally. "I am so much the more disposed to believe in the sincerity of your repentance," says the king,

"as you have previously given proofs of your zeal for the support of the monarchy, which have not escaped my sensibility, nor that of the whole of my family."

M. d'Espremenil had certainly the right of asserting or publishing what opinions he pleased; and if he thought that the prerogatives of the executive power were too much limited by the assembly, he had also the right to oppose these usurpations, as he formerly resisted the despotism of the executive power when it usurped the privileges of the parliament; but to have made a recantation of acts of public virtue, to repent of deeds by which he had acquired so proud a title to glory and esteem, displays a mind of no very elevated texture, and justifies an opinion that the motives which had once guided his opposition were personal and interested. His repentance, however, if it were sincere, came too late. M. d'Espremenil reaped no advantage from his conversion during the life of the king, and after the fall of the monarch unhappily shared his fate.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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